

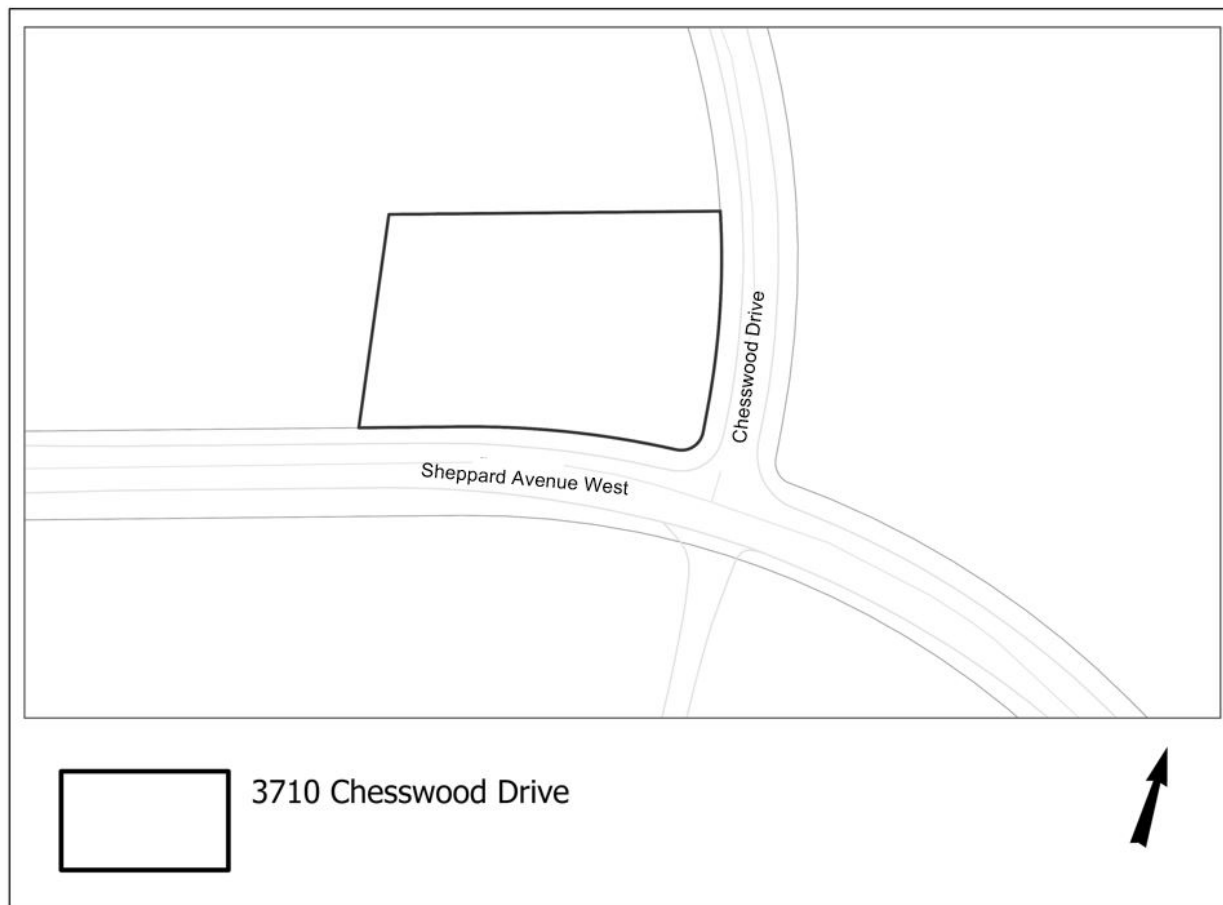
Attachment 1: Final Assessments and Recommendations on Requests to Convert Land Designated Employment Areas

Request	Municipal Address	Ward	Page
019	3710 Chesswood Drive	York Centre (6)	2
103	340-364 Evans Avenue and 12-16 Arnold Street	Etobicoke – Lakeshore (Ward 3)	8
112* 049 080	160 Queens Plate Drive* 330 Queens Plate Drive 2200-2250 Islington Avenue	Etobicoke North (1)	15

*Conversion Request 112 for 160 Queens Plate Drive was included in Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 653, as adopted by City Council on July 19-20, 2023.

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF CONVERSION REQUEST NO. 019

Address: 3710 Chesswood Drive
General area: Finch Avenue West and Keele Street
Ward: York Centre (6)
Owner (Applicant): Montecassino Inc. (MHBC)
Site area: Approximately 0.89 ha (2.2 acres)
Existing uses: Commercial 5-storey hotel and events space



CONVERSION REQUEST

Proposal: Request to redesignate from *General Employment Areas* to a *Mixed-Use Areas* designation to permit residential and commercial uses.

OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING FRAMEWORK

Urban Structure: *Employment Areas* (Map 2)

Designation(s): *General Employment Areas* (Map 16)

Area Specific Policies: N/A

Zoning By-law: Industrial-Commercial Zone (MC(55)(H)) in the former North York Zoning By-law 7625

SITE CONTEXT AND ADJACENT USES

North: 5-storey office building

South: Downsview Park and Secondary Plan study currently underway (Update Downsview) for mixed-used redevelopment of the Downsview Airport

East: Plaza consisting of one to two-storey commercial and office uses

West: 1-2 storey employment and commercial buildings

CONVERSION REQUEST CONSIDERATION

The Planning Act, the PPS 2020, and the Growth Plan 2020 emphasize the importance of protecting employment lands to ensure a prosperous economic future. The Growth Plan 2020 and Toronto's Official Plan set out the criteria by which the City is to consider the conversion of lands designated Employment Areas. Criteria include the requirement to demonstrate a need for the conversion; that the City will maintain sufficient land to meet the 2051 employment forecasts set out in the Growth Plan 2020; the conversion would adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area; and, there is a lack of infrastructure and public facilities to accommodate the proposed uses.

The City received over 150 requests to convert lands designated *Core Employment Areas* and *General Employment Areas* as part of the City's Official Plan Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review ("MCR"). Preliminary Assessments were prepared that provided preliminary issues and staff positions on requests. Planning and Housing Committee authorized the use of over 130 preliminary assessments for the basis of consultation with requestors, neighbouring businesses, major facilities, propane operators, other stakeholders and the public.

Staff have reviewed the material provided as part of this conversion request; considered the conclusions of the Peer Review of the Compatibility/Mitigation Study; consulted with

the owner/applicant; and conducted a site visit. In response to issues identified in the Preliminary Assessment, the applicant provided additional materials for review. Staff have considered this supplementary submission in the assessment of this conversion request. This Final Assessment completes the review of Conversion Request No. 019 and provides staff's recommendations.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

3710 Chesswood Drive is part of the Downsview Area of Employment, which represents 588 hectares of land and nearly 35,400 employees in 2,341 businesses in 2022. The employment area is bounded by Steeles Avenue West to the north, Dufferin Street to the east, Sheppard Avenue West and parts of Downsview Park and the Downsview Secondary Plan area to the south, and Keele Street to the east. A small portion of the employment area extends further east to Hidden Trail Road, bounded by G Ross Lord Park to the south.

The Downsview Area of Employment is a viable and successful employment area. With a central location and good access to labour, it has over 17.7 million square feet of rentable industrial building area and a very low vacancy rate of 0.8% in 2021. The area is characterized by manufacturing (22%), transportation, warehousing & wholesale trade (16%) and professional, scientific & technical services (12%) sectors. The area contains almost a quarter of all public administration jobs in *Employment Areas* across the GTA, with top employers including Toronto Transit Commission and Department of National Defense. It also has a large share of health care and professional, scientific and technical services, with prominent employers like Sanofi Pasteur Ltd.

The Downsview Area of Employment continues to thrive, evidenced by significant investment in non-residential construction and alterations, with over \$250 million in non-residential building permits issued between 2016-2021. In addition, 56,000 square metres of new gross floor area is proposed to be added through new development, demonstrating the area's continued ability to attract a range of users. The small inventory of office space in the area will continue to appeal to low-cost businesses, especially those that serve nearby industrial firms.

Employment areas provide opportunities for Torontonians to live and work in the city, rather than commuting to jobs outside the city. Fifty-six percent of the workers in this employment area are residents of the City of Toronto, and 29% of those workers reside in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas ("NIAs"). NIAs are areas identified as priority for investments to improve the general well-being of residents. This area accommodates a significant source of local jobs. Providing convenient access to jobs contributes to the achievement of a complete community.

The accessibility of employment areas by transit is a core strength as the city moves toward adapting to climate change. A significant proportion of workers in this employment area (38%) use a low-carbon mode of travel to work: 34% use transit, which is higher than the average for all areas of employment, while 4% walk or cycle. Toronto residents who work in the Downsview Area of Employment commute by transit on average more than workers in other employment areas (34% and 20%, respectively). Two new higher order transit stops are planned for Keele / Finch and Sheppard /

Chesswood, which will build on the area's ability attract a range of businesses with good access to labour and a central location.

The existing supply of *Employment Areas* is sufficient to meet the 2051 Provincial employment forecasts in Toronto and it is anticipated that the City will meet the employment forecasts allocated to the municipality pursuant to the Growth Plan 2020. It should be noted however that while no single conversion request would affect this outcome, multiple conversions could impact Toronto's ability to meet the Provincial employment forecast. There is no need to convert the employment lands at 3710 Chesswood Drive.

Staff have concerns with the potential impact of re-designating the lands from *General Employment Areas* to a designation that permits residential and other sensitive uses. The lands front onto Sheppard Avenue West and are part of a natural and unbroken edge of the *Employment Area* that extends for approximately 1.5 kilometres on Sheppard Avenue West. The contiguous nature of the *Employment Area* provides land use certainty for business operations and helps to facilitate clustering of associated businesses. The lands are surrounded to the north, east, and west by *General Employment Areas and Core Employment Areas* designated lands. The lands are also surrounded by lands zoned EH (Employment Heavy Industrial Zone), allowing for a full array of industrial uses. The requested introduction of residential and sensitive uses would adversely affect the ability of the *Employment Areas* to provide opportunities for the clustering of similar or related employment uses.

The *Employment Area* is well connected to major goods movement corridors for vehicles. There are six major roadways providing access for traffic/deliveries both in and out of the area: Allen Expressway/Dufferin Street, Keele Street, Finch Avenue West, Steeles Avenue West, Sheppard Avenue West and Wilson Avenue. It is essential to preserve employment lands with good access to important transportation infrastructure to support the movement of goods. The Growth Plan 2020 sets out that municipalities should designate and preserve lands located adjacent to or near major goods movement facilities and corridors, including major highway interchanges, as areas for manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, and appropriate associated uses and ancillary facilities. Conversion of the lands may impact the facilitation of the movement of goods for existing and future employment uses.

A Compatibility/Mitigation ("C/M") Study was required to support each conversion request and peer reviewed. The Peer Review of the C/M Study determined that required information and assessment was not provided with respect to the following: complaint history, stationary noise, assessment of a Class III industrial facility within the potential influence area, the impact on industrial/commercial operations in the vicinity and the broader *Employment Area*, and justification for the classification of major facilities. The Peer Reviewer was not able to confirm that the C/M Study fulfills the City's Terms of Reference for C/M Study requirements. In addition, the Peer Reviewer could not confirm that the proposed residential conversions are compatible within the existing *Employment Area*. Staff considered these findings, in addition to applying all the Conversion and Removal Policies for *Employment Areas* that also address a range of other issues as described in this Final Assessment.

Through the City's peer review and business engagement process, it was determined that the lands are within the area of influence of 56 Class I, II and III industrial sites. In addition, the surrounding nearby planned and current industrial uses can cause considerable noise, vibration and odour issues that would require mitigation measures at the source as well as on site to address compatibility with the sensitive uses. The introduction of sensitive uses would create a likelihood of complaints related to the operations of nearby employment uses and reduce the employment area's ability to provide a stable and productive operating environment and reduce the ability to provide land use certainty for its planned function. The requested conversion would also create a precedent for further conversions.

The lands to the south, across Sheppard Avenue West (a 36-metre right-of-way), are currently being reviewed through the Update Downsview study. The purpose of the review is to update the 2011 Downsview Area Secondary Plan and set out the long-term vision for a complete community centred on transit investment, job creation, parks and open spaces and community services and facilities that will meet the needs of existing and future residents and workers. 3710 Chesswood Drive is not within the study area, and therefore not part of the review.

The lands are located within the Council-adopted Downsview Park Major Transit Station Area ("MTSA"). The MTSA was submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval, as the approval authority for conversion requests on June 20, 2022 and to date, no decision has been made. The Downsview Park MTSA exceeds the minimum density requirements of the Provincial Growth Plan 2020 through existing and planned development. The Growth Plan 2020 minimum density targets for PMTSA/MTSAs are targets for jobs as well as residents. Existing and permitted development within the MTSA is planned for and exceeds the minimum population and employment target of 200 residents and jobs combined per hectare. Approximately 34% of workers access this *Employment Area* by transit. Transit accessible Employment Areas play a key role in providing Torontonians equitable access to employment opportunities.

The proposal for residential uses in this location does not support the achievement of a complete community as it would not provide residents with convenient access to community services and facilities, such as libraries and schools. Accessing the facilities would require crossing major streets if traveling by foot. In order to access the nearest library, public school, catholic school and community centre via walking, the route would require walking across Sheppard Avenue West, Dufferin Street or Keele Street.

The nearest assigned Toronto District School Board (TDSB) intermediate school is 1.8 km away from the lands. The nearest assigned Toronto District School Board (TDSB) elementary school 2.2 km away from the lands. The nearest assigned Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) school is 2.0 km away from the lands.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff reviewed Conversion Request No. 019 (3710 Chesswood Drive) against the policies of the PPS 2020, the Growth Plan 2020, and the Official Plan and recommend that the lands be retained as *Employment Areas* and continue to be designated as *General Employment Areas*.

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF CONVERSION REQUEST NO. 103

- Address:** 340-364 Evans Avenue and 12-16 Arnold Street
- General area:** Evans Avenue and Kipling Avenue
- Ward:** Etobicoke – Lakeshore (Ward 3)
- Owner (Applicant):** Delta Property Holdings Inc. and Tonlu Holdings Limited (MHBC)
- Site area:** Approximately 4.7 hectares (11.6 acres)
- Existing uses:** Manufacturing, automobile repair, rental and detailing shop, commercial lumber yard and Royal Ontario Museum storage space (a bingo hall is proposed at 360 Evans Avenue)



CONVERSION REQUEST

Proposal: Request to redesignate the lands from *Core Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* or *Regeneration Areas* to permit residential uses.

OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING FRAMEWORK

Urban Structure: *Employment Areas* (Map 2)

Designation(s): *Core Employment Areas* (Map 15)

Area Specific Policies: N.A

Zoning By-law: Class 1 Industrial (IC.1) in former City of Etobicoke Zoning Code and Employment Industrial (E. 1.0) in Zoning By-Law 569–2013. In September 2022 the Committee of Adjustment approved a minor variance to permit a bingo hall at 360 Evans Avenue (A0332/22EYK).

SITE CONTEXT AND ADJACENT USES

North: Gardiner Expressway

South: Industrial plazas, warehousing and distribution facilities

East: Truck and trailer repair and self-storage

West: Kipling Avenue, Gardiner Expressway on-ramp, with restaurant, landscaper, several detached dwellings and a TTC maintenance garage beyond

CONVERSION REQUEST CONSIDERATION

The *Planning Act*, the PPS 2020, and the Growth Plan 2020 emphasize the importance of protecting employment lands to ensure a prosperous economic future. The Growth Plan 2020 and Toronto's Official Plan set out the criteria by which the City is to consider the conversion of lands designated *Employment Areas*. Criteria include the requirement to demonstrate a need for the conversion; that the City will maintain sufficient land to meet the 2051 employment forecasts set out in the Growth Plan 2020; the conversion would not adversely affect the overall viability of the *Employment Area*; and, there is infrastructure and public facilities to accommodate the proposed uses.

The City received approximately 150 requests to convert lands designated *Core Employment Areas* and *General Employment Areas* as part of the City's Official Plan Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review ("MCR"). Preliminary Assessments were prepared that provided preliminary issues and staff positions on requests. Planning and Housing Committee authorized the use of over 130 preliminary

assessments for the basis of consultation with requestors, neighbouring businesses, major facilities, propane operators, other stakeholders and the public.

Staff have reviewed the materials provided as part of this conversion request, considered the findings of the Peer Review of the Compatibility/Mitigation Study, consulted with the owner/applicant and conducted a site visit. In response to issues identified in the Preliminary Assessment, the applicant provided additional materials for review. Staff have considered this supplementary submission in the assessment of this conversion request. This Final Assessment completes the review of Conversion Request No. 103 and provides staff's recommendations.

At its meeting on March 25, 2022, the Planning and Housing Committee directed staff to report on whether the 28,000 square metres of employment space proposed on the lands as part of a mixed-use development could be secured by the City as a condition of approval by use of stratified title and restrictive covenant on the lands. The Decision History can be accessed at this link:

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.PH32.8>

Conversion Request No.103 seeks to redesignate the lands to either *Mixed Use Areas* or *Regeneration Areas* to permit residential uses and a daycare. The proposal also includes residential uses, retail uses, a park and 28,000 square metres of employment uses that are defined as light industrial and office uses. The proposal includes these uses in mixed-use buildings, with employment and retail uses at the ground and lower floor levels and residential uses on the floors above. This proposal is similar to many of the 150 conversion requests, as most requests propose employment and residential uses in mixed-use buildings.

Conversion requests recommended for approval in July 2022 and June 2023 required employment space be provided on the lands. Where applicable, this requirement is implemented through a site and area specific policy (SASP) that permits residential uses provided that a specified amount of employment gross floor area is developed on the lands and constructed prior to or concurrent with any residential gross floor area. This requirement ensures that the lands still serve an economic function.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

The lands are located in the central portion of the South Etobicoke employment area. This area ranks as the second largest concentration of land designated *Employment Areas* in the City, accommodating over 39,000 jobs. This node has excellent highway access with close proximity to Toronto's Lester B. Pearson International Airport and the downtown core. Transportation and warehousing are the predominant employment types however, manufacturing also maintains a significant continuing presence. Equally important is the existence of two other influential major industry hubs. First is the substantial presence of the food industry, which is the second largest food cluster in North America. The food industry is largely anchored and supported by the Ontario Food Terminal ("OFT") – the second largest fresh food distribution facility in North America. Next is the local film industry hub anchored by one of the largest production studios in Canada as well as the country's largest film equipment supplier. Given their dominance and economic importance, there is a strong locational demand to be within

close proximity to these major facilities from the wide network of firms with goods and services that support these clusters. Reinvestment in this area remains strong with over \$350 million in building permit activity issued between 2016-2021 with at least four new major industrial buildings of over 23,000 square metres currently in the development approval pipeline.

Employment areas provide opportunities for Torontonians to live and work in the City. Fifty-nine percent of the workers in this employment area live in the City, and 19% of those workers reside in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (“NIAs”). NIAs are areas identified as priority for investments to improve the general well-being of residents. This area accommodates a significant source of local jobs. Providing convenient access to jobs contributes to the achievement of a complete community.

The accessibility of employment areas by transit is a core strength as the city moves towards adapting to climate change. Forty-one percent of workers in this employment area use a low-carbon mode of travel to work: 34% use transit, while 7% walk or cycle.

The existing supply of *Employment Areas* is sufficient to meet the 2051 Provincial employment forecasts in Toronto and it is anticipated that the City will meet the employment forecasts allocated to the municipality pursuant to the Growth Plan 2020. It should be noted however that while no single conversion request would affect this outcome, multiple conversions could impact Toronto's ability to meet the Provincial employment forecast. There is no need to convert the employment lands at 340 – 364 Evans Avenue and 12 – 16 Arnold Street.

The lands are situated at the midpoint of this *Employment Area* that stretches 2.7 kilometres along the north side of Evans Avenue in an east-west direction between The East Mall and Islington Avenue. The lands are located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Evans and Kipling Avenues, at the Gardiner Expressway/Kipling Avenue interchange. The *Employment Area* also stretches 1.5 kilometres to the south along both sides of Kipling Avenue.

Conversion Request No. 103 seeks the redesignation of *Core Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas*. It is in staff's opinion that the lands should be retained as *Core Employment Areas* to enable existing business to continue to operate in a stable environment and support future business investment and reinvestment on the lands of the South Etobicoke employment area.

Employment Areas represent a finite resource warranting protection for present and future re-use as needs evolve. South Etobicoke appeals to a broad pool of firms including large manufacturing/distributors and smaller-scale local-serving businesses as well as last-mile fulfilment centres. These lands are designated to provide for and be preserved for employment uses that rely on major transportation infrastructure for the movement of goods.

The lands are strategically located adjacent to a group of parcels to the south, east and west designated for *Core Employment Uses* that are used for and planned for business and economic activities. A conversion of the northeastern most portion of the employment lands would alter the contiguous configuration of the *Employment Area*

designations and could negatively impact the associated employment operations and future investment. Within the immediate area on the neighbouring block to the south, there are over 50,000 square metres of new industrial developments at various stages in development. Some proposals seek to modernize existing facilities and others to develop an entirely new facility, all of which demonstrate an increased demand for industrial land in the immediate area.

Introducing sensitive land uses to this portion of the *Employment Area* would alter the viability of the lands and surrounding area lands to be used for long term employment uses and would reduce a finite supply of employment land available to establish businesses and grow jobs. There is a potential risk that a conversion of the lands would have a cumulative adverse impact on the area and be a precedent for additional conversions south of the Gardiner Expressway and in the *Employment Area* interior.

The lands are located immediately adjacent to the Gardiner Expressway and in proximity to the regional Highway 427 interchange with the Gardiner Expressway. It is essential to preserve employment lands with good access to important transportation infrastructure that support the movement of goods. The Growth Plan 2020 sets out that municipalities should designate and preserve lands located adjacent to or near major movement facilities and corridors, including major highway interchanges, as areas for manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, and appropriate associated uses and ancillary facilities. Conversion of the lands may impact the facilitation of the movement of goods for existing and future employment uses.

A conversion of the lands does not support the existing and future preservation of *Employment Areas* next to major goods corridors. The proposed conversion to introduce sensitive uses immediately south of the Gardiner Expressway sets a precedent in the immediate area. The proposed residential conversion will likely have an impact on the capacity of the transportation network and potentially limit or cause delays to the movement of goods for existing businesses within the immediate and broader *Employment Area* due in part to competing demands for the road infrastructure. Added congestion could potentially impact the growth of businesses in the immediate area and cause significant disruptions or diminish the ability to manage the flow and inventory of goods movements in the *Employment Area*.

Businesses profit from the prominence and visibility of locating along major highways as well as the highway access for goods movement. Residential dwellings do not require prominent or visible sites and, according to noise studies prepared to inform this report, proposed residential uses would need to examine the possibility of introducing measures to mitigate noise and vibration from the adjacent highway. Existing employment lands along major highways should be preserved as prominent business sites in order to benefit from the visibility and access, rather than converting them to residential uses that need to deal with adverse effects from highway traffic.

The contiguous nature of these *Employment Area* lands provides land use certainty for operating businesses and helps to facilitate clustering of businesses activity. The lands currently accommodate similar employment uses to others nearby such as warehousing and distribution that benefit from direct access to the Gardiner Expressway and proximity to Highway 427. It is important that industry sector clusters exist and the

opportunity for clustering should be maintained and essential linkages to supply chains, service providers, markets and labour pools are preserved. Given the context of the location and surrounding land use designations, conversion of the lands may adversely affect the ability to provide opportunities for the clustering of similar or related employment uses.

Outreach to local industry included those with existing provincial Environmental Compliance Approvals (“ECA”) and Environmental Activity and Sector Registrations (“EASR”), of which there are several in the area, in order to gauge the impact of the proposed conversion to allow residential development on the south side of the Gardiner Expressway. Local industry surrounding the lands expressed concern with the proposed introduction of residential uses on the lands, noting; the potential for increased traffic and disruption to truck movement impacting operation efficiency in the area given the adjacency of the lands to the highway entrance and exit ramps. Another concern raised was the risk to existing and future opportunities to support employment clusters in the area as a result of loss of employment lands due to the introduction of residential uses on lands designated for employment uses. Similarly, concerns were raised over establishing a precedent for future residential uses to locate in the surrounding area, which could deter business reinvestment over a larger area. Given that the supply of lands in *Employment Areas* is finite and will have to serve future businesses in providing jobs for an expanding population, the City’s employment lands should be reserved for business activities including opportunities to support clusters and not for residential uses that can locate in many other areas of the City.

A Compatibility/Mitigation (“C/M”) Study was required to support each conversion request and peer reviewed. The submitted C/M Study has indicated that the proposed residential uses would require mitigation measures to be compatible with the nearby existing and future land uses. The Peer Review of the C/M Study determined that required information and assessment was not provided with respect to the following: noise impacts from surrounding environment, transportation noise and vibration, air quality, complaint history, consultation with surrounding businesses, impacts of major facilities to continue to operate in compliance with environmental policies, regulations, approvals or authorizations/guidelines, accurate distance to industrial/commercial operations in the vicinity. The Peer Reviewer was not able to confirm that the C/M Study fulfill the City’s Terms of Reference for C/M Study requirements. Given the lack of information, the Peer Reviewer could not confirm that the proposed residential conversions are compatible within the existing *Employment Area*. Staff considered these findings in addition to applying all the Conversion and Removal Policies for *Employment Areas* that also address a range of other issues as described in this Final Assessment.

The proposal for residential uses in this location does not support the achievement of a complete community as it would not provide residents with convenient access to community services and facilities such as schools, and libraries. The lands are located internally within the *Employment Area* and physically isolated from existing and planned community facilities needed to accommodate the proposed residential conversion. The lands are located greater than a 2 kilometre walk to the nearest schools, over a 3 kilometre walk to the nearest library and a 1.5 kilometre walk from parks and playgrounds. Access to community services requires travelling through the employment

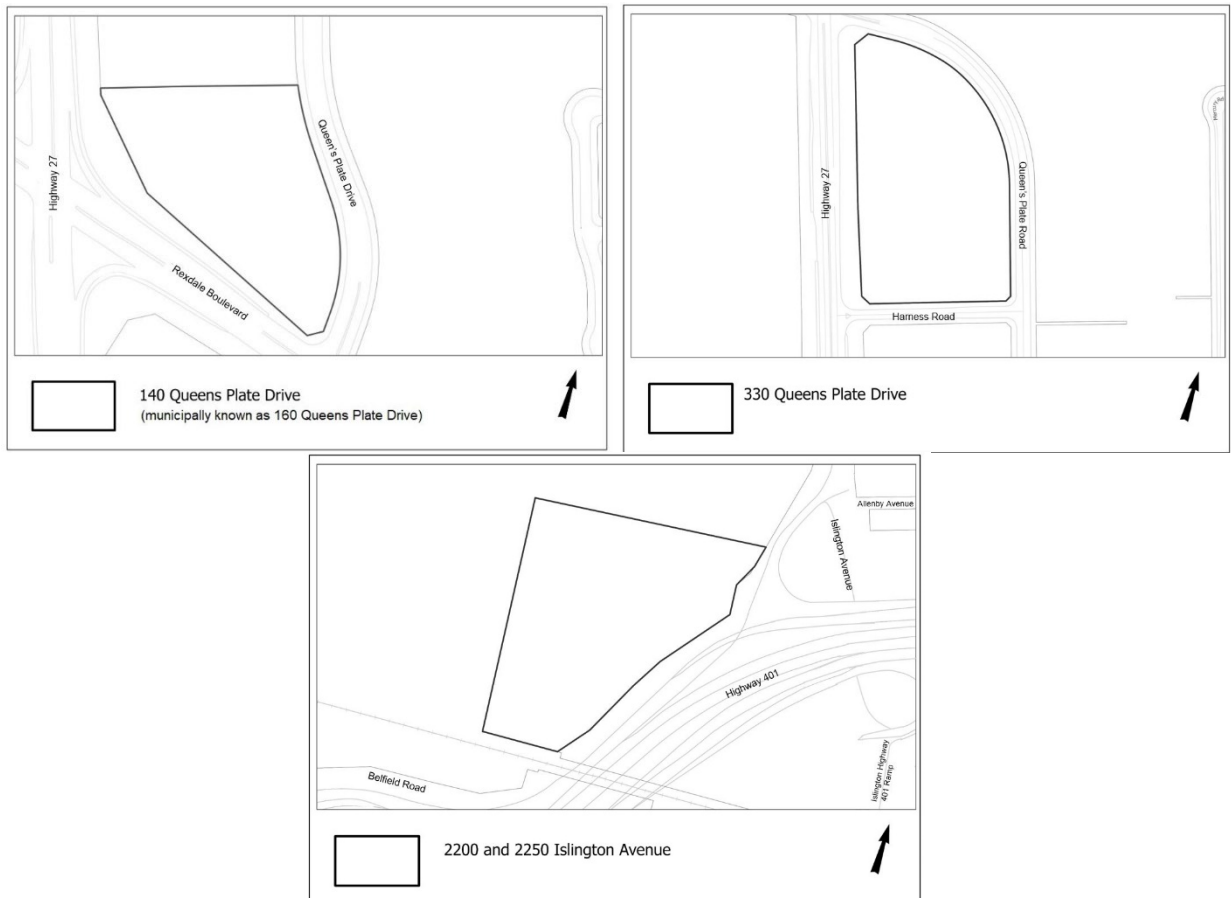
area and crossing major streets, rail corridors and highways interchange exit and entrance ramps, including some without signals to facilitate pedestrian crossings.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff reviewed Conversion Request No. 103 (340 – 364 Evans Avenue and 12 – 16 Arnold Street) against the policies of the PPS 2020, the Growth Plan 2020, and the Official Plan and recommend that the lands be retained as *Employment Areas* and continue to be designated as *Core Employment Areas*.

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF CONVERSION REQUEST NO. 112, 049 AND 080

- Address:** 160 Queens Plate Drive (No. 112)
330 Queens Plate Drive (No. 049)
2200-2250 Islington Avenue (No. 080)
- General area:** Northeast of Rexdale Boulevard and Highway 27, and northwest of Islington Avenue and Highways 401 and 409
- Ward:** Etobicoke North (1)
- Owner (Applicant):** Queen's Plate Limited (Bousfields Inc.) (No. 112)
Choice Properties Limited Partnership (Zelinka Priamo Ltd.) (No. 49)
RCG Islington 401 Limited Partnership (Bousfields Inc.) (No. 080)
- Site area:** Approximately 17.03 hectares (41.96 acres)
- Existing uses:** Retail, service, fuel station, vacant parcel, food manufacturing, printing, warehousing and office



CONVERSION REQUEST

Proposal: No. 112 and No. 049 – request to redesignate all of the lands from *General Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* to permit residential uses
No. 080 – request to redesignate the southern portion of the lands from *General Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* to permit residential uses

OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING FRAMEWORK

Urban Structure: *Employment Areas* (Map 2) (No. 112 and No. 080)
Employment District (Map 2) – subject to OPA 231 Appeal (No. 049)

Designation(s): *General Employment Areas* (Map 13) (No. 112 and No. 080)
Employment Areas (Map 13) – subject to OPA 231 Appeal (No. 049)

Area Specific Policies: SASP 29, L.B. Pearson International Airport Operating Area
SASP 531, Lands in Proximity to Pearson International Airport

Zoning By-law: Class 1 Industrial (I.C1) in former City of Etobicoke Zoning Code (No. 112)
Limited Commercial Zone (CL) in former City of Etobicoke Zoning Code (No. 049)
– Class 1 Industrial (I.C1) in former City of Etobicoke Zoning Code (No. 080 – 2200 Islington Avenue)
– Employment Industrial (E 1.0) in Zoning By-law 569-2013 (No. 080 – 2250 Islington Avenue)

SITE CONTEXT AND ADJACENT USES

North: No. 112 – Retail, service, restaurant and fitness centre uses
No. 049 – Retail
No. 080 – Development application for low rise retail including major retail (13 277902 WET 02 OZ), with Rexdale Boulevard beyond

South: No. 112 – Vehicle rental, hotel, restaurant, office and service
No. 049 – Retail, service and restaurant
No. 080 – Highways 401 and 409, Highway 401 on-ramp and Metrolinx Kitchener GO Corridor

East: No. 112 – Office and self-storage uses
No. 049 – Manufacturing
No. 080 – Highway 401 on-ramp and off-ramp and Islington Avenue

West: No. 112 – Casino Woodbine, retail, service and restaurant
No. 049 – Retail, service and restaurant
No. 080 – Wholesale, office, cultural community centre, utilities and distribution

CONVERSION REQUEST CONSIDERATION

The Planning Act, the PPS 2020, and the Growth Plan 2020 emphasize the importance of protecting employment lands to ensure a prosperous economic future. The Growth Plan 2020 and Toronto's Official Plan set out the criteria by which the City is to consider the conversion of lands designated *Employment Areas*. Criteria include the requirement to demonstrate a need for the conversion; that the City will maintain sufficient land to meet the 2051 employment forecasts set out in the Growth Plan 2020; the conversion would not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area; and, there is infrastructure and public facilities to accommodate the proposed uses.

The City received approximately 150 requests to convert lands designated *Core Employment Areas* and *General Employment Areas* as part of the City's Official Plan Growth Plan Conformity and Municipal Comprehensive Review ("MCR"). Preliminary Assessments were prepared that provided preliminary issues and staff positions on requests. Planning and Housing Committee authorized the use of over 130 preliminary assessments for the basis of consultation with requestors, neighbouring businesses, major facilities, propane operators, other stakeholders and the public.

Staff have reviewed the material provided as part of these conversion requests; considered the conclusions of the Peer Reviews of the Compatibility/Mitigation Studies; consulted with the owners/applicants and the Greater Toronto Airports Authority; and conducted site visits. This Final Assessment completes the review of Conversion Request No. 112, 049 and 080 and provides staff's recommendations.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

The lands are located in the northeastern part of the Rexdale Airport employment area. This part of the employment area contains a diverse range of employment uses including a substantial stock of quality, affordable office space. This employment area contains approximately 2,490,000 square metres of industrial rentable building area. In 2022, the area employed almost 42,000 people in over 1,500 businesses, with the top types of employment being in office uses, followed by manufacturing and services. In 2021 the vacancy rate was low at 3.7 percent, and with approximately \$690 million dollars in non-residential building permits issued from 2016-2021, this reflects the confidence and interest that businesses have in locating here, and that there is a strong demand for industrial land and buildings here.

The proximity and convenient access to the Toronto International Airport, active rail network, superior access to three provincial 400-series highways benefits employment uses in this area. Lands in this employment area, in tandem with the Pearson International Airport help move products, goods and services. Access to the level 400-series highways is optimal for businesses with high shipping traffic to be in this employment area. A significant portion of this employment area is located within Site and Area Specific Policy 29 (SASP 29) L.B. Pearson International Airport Operating

Area (“AOA”) which in part prohibits residential and other sensitive land uses. This policy area makes it ideal for heavier types of industry to locate here, particularly within interior locations where sensitive land uses such as residential are not expected. Given current growth projections, this area is expected to continue playing an important support role to the local airport based economy.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade describes the employment lands that surround Pearson International Airport, including the Rexdale Airport employment area and also employment lands in Mississauga, Brampton and Vaughan, as a vital economic zone in Ontario and Canada. The Board of Trade notes that 400,000 jobs are accommodated in this area, making it the second largest employment zone in Canada after downtown Toronto. In Ontario, this area accounts for 51% of air transportation jobs, 36% of warehousing and storage jobs and 25% of pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing jobs. The Board of Trade also cautions that a scarcity of employment lands is restricting economic potential.

Employment areas provide opportunities for Torontonians to live and work in the City. Fifty percent of the workers in this employment area live in the City of Toronto, and 33% of those reside in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (“NIAs”). NIAs are areas identified as priority for investments to improve the general well-being of residents. This area accommodates a significant source of local jobs. Providing convenient access to jobs contributes to the achievement of a complete community.

The accessibility of *Employment Areas* by transit is a core strength as the city moves towards adapting to climate change. A significant proportion of workers in this employment area (21%) use a low-carbon mode of travel to work: 19% use transit, while 2% walk or cycle.

The existing supply of *Employment Areas* is sufficient to meet the 2051 Provincial employment forecasts in Toronto and it is anticipated that the City will meet the employment forecasts allocated to the municipality pursuant to the Growth Plan 2020. It should be noted however that while no single conversion request would affect this outcome, multiple conversions could impact Toronto's ability to meet the Provincial employment forecast. There is no need to convert the *Employment Areas* at 160 Queens Plate Drive, 330 Queens Plate Drive and 2200-2250 Islington Avenue.

This cluster of conversion requests is located in the northern portion of a large *Employment Area* at the northwestern periphery of Toronto. Each of the three conversion request sites are located next to employment uses on lands designated as *Employment Areas*. Each of the sites are also located along major streets as identified on Map 3 of the Official Plan. The Conversion Request No. 080 lands are located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Islington Avenue and the corridor that contains the Metrolinx Kitchener GO Corridor, Highway 401 and Highway 409. The two Queens Plate Drive properties are located north and east of the intersection of Highway 27 and Rexdale Boulevard.

Official Plan Amendment No. 231 (“OPA 231”) was adopted by City Council on December 19, 2013 and contains new economic policies and new policies and designations for *Employment Areas* as part of the Official Plan and Municipal

Comprehensive Reviews. OPA 231 was appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board by numerous parties, including the owners of 330 Queens Plate Drive and 2200 Islington Avenue. This appeal concerning 330 Queens Plate Drive has not been scheduled for a hearing at the Ontario Land Tribunal at this time. The OPA 231 appeal related to 2200 Islington Avenue was withdrawn. Staff's final assessment of these conversion requests is consistent with OPA 231 which recommended that the lands be retained for employment purposes and designated *General Employment Areas*.

The conversion lands are located within SASP 29, the Airport Operating Area for Pearson International Airport which stipulates that new residential and other sensitive uses are prohibited, and can only be permitted through site specific zoning permission if the use is generally consistent with Transport Canada's latest guidelines. Consideration for residential uses may only be permitted provided that there will be no negative impacts on the long-term function of the airport.

Staff consulted with the Greater Toronto Airport Authority ("GTAA"). As Canada's largest and busiest airport, Pearson International Airport is one of the country's most significant pieces of transportation infrastructure and a key centre of air connectivity, playing a unique role in the global movement of people and goods. Toronto Pearson is federally regulated, the airport is not bound by municipal noise by-laws, and because federal laws place no maximum limits or time restrictions on noise level, the introduction of sensitive uses is not recommended due to potential conflict between incompatible uses locating in areas impacted by the operation of the airport.

Toronto Pearson works to manage noise associated with their operations. Land use planning is a key part of the Noise Management Program to limit the number of people affected by noise resulting from aircraft operations. Transport Canada's Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF) model is the official methodology used to quantify noise exposure in the vicinity of Canadian airports for land use planning purposes. The metric allows Transport Canada to predict a community's response to aircraft noise. If the NEF level is greater than 35, complaints are likely to be high. An NEF range above 25 still has the potential to cause complaints. The lands of 330 Queens Plate Drive (No. 049), 2200-2250 Islington Avenue (No. 080) and a portion of 160 Queens Plate Drive (No. 112) are currently located within the 30 Noise Exposure Forecast ("NEF") noise contour range, where noise complaints are anticipated and residential development is prohibited. The remainder of 160 Queens Plate Drive (No. 112) is located within the 25 to 30 NEF noise contour range, a range that has the potential to cause complaints.

The Pearson Airport 2017-2037 Master Plan states that the total number of passengers flying to, from or through Toronto Pearson International Airport are forecasted to increase at an annual growth rate of 3.1 per cent. The Master Plan prioritizes collaboration with government agencies and other entities in response to the projected accommodation of 85 million passengers in 2037, compared with 47 million passengers today. These conversion requests seeking residential use permissions and other sensitive uses were considered in part by the future expansion plans of the airport and the development of a new Multiple Scenario Envelope NEF contour for 2037.

Changes to the noise contour analysis are anticipated given plans to expand airport operations and accommodate additional flights, which includes a new 6th runway. As a

result, the updated NEF associated with the conversion request lands will potentially be higher than what is currently identified. The new system will include recommendation for a threshold value, beyond which noise-sensitive land uses should not be permitted to develop. That threshold will form a basis, similar to the 30 NEF contour line in the current system, for establishing a new revised boundary of an Airport Operating Area.

Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA) advised that retaining *Employment Areas* exclusively as stable places of business and economic activities is integral to the success of Pearson Airport and the economic health of the surrounding region. As well, the GTAA considers SASP 29 to be extremely important to the airport to help protect for the safety and economic vitality of the airport both now and for the long term.

In addition to consulting, the GTAA submitted a letter on June 30, 2022 to express support for the OP's *Employment Areas* policies, the preservation of employment lands and the separation of sensitive land uses from *Employment Areas* that are within the Airport Operating Area. Additionally, the GTAA noted the preservation and continuation of SASP 29 to be extremely important to the airport in order to protect for the safety and economic vitality of the airport both now and for the long term.

These three conversion requests represent a significant amount of employment lands with a total area of 17.03 hectares (41.96 acres). The assessment of the proposed conversion requests recognizes the potential impact of multiple conversion requests on the viability of the *Employment Areas* and their planned function.

These lands maintain optimal visibility and access that characterize them as key locations for employment, which are in proximity to, or front major streets as shown on Map 3 of the Official Plan. The lands are in the immediate vicinity of major transportation infrastructure such as Highway 27 and the Metrolinx Kitchener GO Corridor. The lands are further connected to an integrated transportation network that is ideal for siting employment activity, with connections to Highway 427, Highway 409 and Highway 401. Of significant importance, this *Employment Area* also benefits from access to air transport routes which are optimal for businesses seeking to move goods internationally.

It is essential to preserve employment lands with good access to important transportation infrastructure that support the movement of goods. The Growth Plan 2020 sets out that municipalities should designate and preserve lands located adjacent to or near major goods movement facilities and corridors, including major highway interchanges, as areas for manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, and appropriate associated uses and ancillary facilities. A conversion of the lands to introduce sensitive uses may impact the movement of goods within the *Employment Area* and the ability of the area to provide a stable and productive operating environment for business located in proximity to the airport.

The south portion of the lands of 2200-2250 Islington Avenue are embedded within a group of parcels designated for employment uses that is used for and planned for business and economic activities. A conversion of the employment lands would alter the contiguous configuration of the *Employment Area* designations and could negatively impact the associated employment operations. Further, a conversion of northern portion

of the lands, on Queens Plate Drive (Conversion Request No. 049) would disrupt the continuity of employment lands that are appropriately buffered from residential and other sensitive uses to the north by the Humber River and ravine.

Local industry surrounding the lands have expressed concern with the introduction of residential uses to the *Employment Area*, and potential compatibility issues that may affect business operations. Several businesses surrounding Conversion Requests 049 and 112 have expressed concern with potential conversion of the lands, some stating that they operate 7 days a week, 24 hours a day with related truck traffic, noise and vibration impacts and overnight lighting. There are additional concerns with the following: impact of residential traffic on the area, security, ability to operate, complaints from residents due to noise and uncertainty in future occupancy as a tenant.

Local industry surrounding Conversion Request No. 080 have expressed concern regarding the introduction of residential uses in this location. Further, businesses have stated the importance of the location for employment purposes with reference to the proximity to the rail corridor, and use of employment lands for storage and warehouse uses. Conversion of these lands may negatively impact business operations, as businesses surrounding the conversion request lands are predominantly comprised of manufacturing, retail and service industries as well as wholesale and distribution uses.

A Compatibility/Mitigation (“C/M”) Study was required to support each conversion request and peer reviewed. The submitted Compatibility/Mitigation (“C/M”) Studies have indicated that the proposed residential uses would require further study respecting aircraft noise, noise for road traffic impacts, air quality from traffic, several facilities, transportation vibration, and NEF contours.

The Peer Reviews of the C/M Studies determined that the proposed residential uses would require further study respecting: complaint history, noise, vibration, air quality, justification for classification of a facility, preliminary air traffic impacts, preliminary traffic noise impacts, additional industrial/commercial operations in the vicinity, best industry practices for analysis and recommendation of mitigation measures, impact of the request on surrounding employment areas and facilities. The Peer Reviewers were not able to confirm that the C/M Studies fulfil the City’s Terms of Reference for C/M Study requirements. In addition, the Peer Reviewers could not confirm that the proposed residential conversions are compatible within the existing *Employment Area*. Staff considered these findings, in addition to applying all the Conversion and Removal Policies for *Employment Areas* that also address a range of other issues as described in this Final Assessment.

The proposals for residential uses in these locations do not support the achievement of a complete community as they would not provide residents with convenient access to local stores, schools, services and public service facilities.

The closest TDSB Elementary school to 330 Queens Plate Drive and 160 Queens Plate Drive is approximately 2.3km in walking distance from the lands. The closest library is approximately 2.4km from the site in walking distance and requires the crossing of a major road.

The closest recreation centre is approximately 3.1km in walking distance from 2250 Islington Avenue, and requires the crossing of a major road. The closest TDSB elementary school is approximately 1.1km in walking distance away, and access from the conversion request lands requires the crossing of a major road.

There is no convenient access to higher order transit from the lands to support residential uses on the lands. The closest rail option is not located within a convenient distance to the lands, and the Etobicoke North GO Station is scheduled to be closed.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff reviewed Conversion Request Nos. 112 (160 Queens Plate Drive), 049 (330 Queens Plate Drive) and 080 (2200-2250 Islington Avenue) against the policies of the PPS 2020, the Growth Plan 2020, and the Official Plan and recommend that the lands be retained as *Employment Areas* and continue to be designated as *General Employment Areas*.