

# **Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Five Deferred Employment Area Conversion Requests - Final Report**

Date: October 3, 2023

To: City Council

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: All

## **SUMMARY**

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This report responds to direction from the July 19-20, 2023 City Council meeting on item PH5.3 Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Seventy Employment Area Conversion Requests and Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policy Review – Final Report. City Council directed the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report to the October 11-13, 2023 meeting of City Council on the following conversion requests:

- Conversion Request 019 – 3710 Chesswood Drive;
- Conversion Request 049 – 330 Queens Plate Drive;
- Conversion Request 080 – 2200-2250 Islington Avenue;
- Conversion Request 103 – 340-364 Evans Avenue and 12-16 Arnold Street; and
- Conversion Request 104 – 2450 Finch Avenue West.

Council authorized the commencement of the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and Growth Plan Conformity Exercise known as “Our Plan Toronto”, on August 4, 2020. As part of the MCR, the City Planning Division received approximately 150 requests to convert lands designated *Core Employment Areas* or *General Employment Areas* in the Official Plan for non-employment uses, including some of which were City-initiated.

As part of the MCR, City Council has considered over 145 conversion requests in three final reports, which resulted in staff recommending the conversion of over 60 conversion requests. The implementing Official Plan Amendments (OPA 591, OPA 644 and OPA 653) were considered under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, where the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority. All three Council adopted OPAs are with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for final decisions.

Staff’s final recommendations on these five conversion requests were originally included in PH5.3 Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Seventy Employment Area Conversion Requests and Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policy Review - Final Report, which was the third in a series of Final Reports that provided staff recommendations on Employment Area conversion requests as part of the Municipal

Comprehensive Review (MCR) of the Official Plan. These five sites were considered at a Special Public Meeting under Section 26 of the *Planning Act* regarding the City's phased Official Plan and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews at the July 5, 2023 Planning and Housing Committee.

This report reiterates the staff recommendations for four of the five deferred conversion requests and recommends that Council continue to defer consideration of the lands described as 2450 Finch Avenue West to enable staff to continue ongoing discussions and consideration of additional materials.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council declare that the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) is concluded, except as it pertains to the following parcels of land:

- 388 Carlaw Avenue and 10 Dickens Street;
- Conversion Request 114 for 301 Rockcliffe Boulevard; and
- Conversion Request 070 for 825 Don Mills Road.

2. If City Council does not adopt Official Plan Amendment 683 substantially in accordance with Attachment 1 to the report (September 14, 2023) from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning in Item PH6.3 (conversion request for East Harbour lands), then City Council declare the following parcels of land be added to the list in Part 1 above:

- Conversion Request 041 for 21 Don Roadway, 30 Booth Avenue, and 375 & 385 Eastern Avenue (East Harbour lands);

3. City Council further defer consideration of Conversion Request 104 for 2450 Finch Avenue West and request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division direct staff to report directly to the November 8 to 10, 2023 meeting of City Council with a final recommendation.

4. City Council request that the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division consider how 2444 Finch Avenue West and 4 Milvan Drive may be incorporated into an Official Plan Amendment respecting Conversion Request 104 for 2450 Finch Avenue West, and to report back to the Planning and Housing Committee in the first quarter of 2024.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

## DECISION HISTORY

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The information below builds on, and provides an update to the Decision History found as [Attachment 3 in Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Seventy Employment Area Conversion Requests and Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policy Review - Final Report](#) dated June 16, 2023 from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning.

### Conversion Requests (Third Grouping)

At its meeting on July 19 - 20, 2023, Council adopted OPA 653, with amendments, as part of a phased MCR and Growth Plan Conformity Exercise. OPA 653 implements the approval of 36 conversion requests undertaken under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*, 23 of which were recommended by staff. The OPA also includes amendments to Employment Areas that have Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policies that include residential permissions in order to conform to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020), Policy 2.2.5.7 and Official Plan Amendment 591, which prohibit residential uses within lands designated as Employment Areas.

Through this decision Council declared the conclusion of the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) except with respect to the following lands, which staff recommended be deferred:

- 388 Carlaw Avenue and 10 Dickens Street;
- Conversion Request 041 for 21 Don Roadway, 30 Booth Avenue, and 375 & 385 Eastern Avenue (East Harbour lands);
- Conversion Request 114 for 301 Rockcliffe Boulevard; and
- Conversion Request 070 for 825 Don Mills Road.

Staff recommended deferral of these addresses for a variety of reasons including coordination with other planning processes, on-going discussions regarding existing appeals, as well as flood mitigation concerns.

In addition to the staff-recommended deferred sites, Council deferred its decision on the following conversion requests and directed staff to report to the October 11-13, 2023, meeting of City Council on:

- Conversion Request 103 for 340-364 Evans Avenue and 12-16 Arnold Street;
- Conversion Request 019 for 3710 Chesswood Drive;
- Conversion Request 104 for 2450 Finch Avenue West;
- Conversion Request 049 for 330 Queens Plate Drive; and
- Conversion Request 080 for 2200-2250 Islington Avenue  
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.PH5.3>

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

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The “Issue Background” for these five conversion requests can be found in [Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Seventy Employment Area Conversion Requests and Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policy Review - Final Report](#) dated June 16, 2023 from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning.

## COMMENTS

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The comments below build on, and provide an update to the “Comments” section in [Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Seventy Employment Area Conversion Requests and Chapter 7 Site and Area Specific Policy Review - Final Report](#) dated June 16, 2023 from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning.

### Deferred Conversion Requests

The staff recommendations for the five deferred conversion requests are summarized below. Details of staff’s review for each site can be found in the Final Assessments in Attachment 1, except for Conversion Request 104 for 2450 Finch Avenue West which is subject to ongoing review at this time and will be the subject of a future report.

#### 1. Conversion Request 103: 340-364 Evans Avenue and 12-16 Arnold Street

This site is the subject of a conversion request to redesignate the property from *Core Employment Areas* to either *Mixed Use Areas* or *Regeneration Areas* to permit residential development. The existing uses on the site are manufacturing, automobile repair, rental and detailing shops, a commercial lumber yard, and storage space allocated to the Royal Ontario Museum (with a proposed bingo hall at 360 Evans Avenue). The lands abut the south side of the Gardiner Expressway, and there are various industrial plazas, warehousing, and distribution facilities located south of the lands. Truck and trailer repair facilities and self-storage units are located to the east, whereas to the west are Kipling Avenue and access to the Gardiner Expressway. The lands are situated at a key location within the South Etobicoke employment area, which is the second largest concentration of land designated *Employment Areas* in Toronto and accommodates over 43,000 jobs. The lands are located at the midpoint of an *Employment Area* stretching 2.7 kilometres along the north side of Evans Avenue in an east-west direction. The *Employment Area* also stretches 1.5 kilometres south of the Gardiner Expressway and the lands along both sides of Kipling Avenue. Staff recommend retaining the lands as *Employment Areas*, maintaining their current designation as *Core Employment Areas*.

Several letters of correspondence were received by the Planning and Housing Committee and City Council supporting staff’s recommendations to retain this site as *Employment Areas*. Area businesses that submitted letters include Steamwhistle Brewing, Klaus Marine, William F. White International, Cana-Datum, Cine-space Studios, and Bondi Produce, as well as the Mimico Lakeshore Community Network. The

Residential Construction Council of Ontario submitted a letter to the Committee in support of the conversion request.

Staff's original recommendation contained in report PH5.3 to the July Council meeting regarding Conversion Request 103 remains unchanged. The conversion request is not supported.

## **2. Conversion Request 019: 3710 Chesswood Drive**

This site is subject to a conversion request to redesignate the property from *General Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* to permit residential and commercial uses. Presently, the existing uses on the site include a 5-storey hotel and event space. There is a 5-storey office building to the north and Downsview Park to the south. To the east, there is a plaza comprising one to two-storey commercial and office establishments, while to the west there are 1-2 storey employment and commercial buildings. The lands are part of a natural and unbroken edge of the *Employment Area* that extends for approximately 1.5 kilometres on Sheppard Avenue West and are within the area of influence of 56 Class I, II and III industrial sites. The contiguous nature of the *Employment Area* provides land use certainty for business operations. 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. Staff recommend retaining the lands as *Employment Areas*, maintaining their existing designation as *General Employment Areas*.

Staff's original recommendation contained in report PH5.3 to the July Council meeting regarding Conversion Request 019 remains unchanged. The conversion request is not supported.

## **3. Conversion Request 104: 2450 Finch Avenue West**

This site is subject to a conversion request submission that proposed to redesignate the property from *General Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* to permit residential development. Ten of the eleven industrial units on the lands are currently occupied by businesses with various uses including retail, service, and automobile repair. The area north of the lands is designated *Core Employment Area* uses and includes manufacturing, place of worship, distribution, automobile repair and office uses. Finch Avenue West is located immediately south of the lands, with a mix of retail and low-scale residential uses beyond. East of the lands is a restaurant and a vacant property proposed to be developed with 4-storey office building. To the west is the Duncanwoods Greenbelt ravine.

Following the July 19-20, 2023 City Council meeting, the owner contacted staff to discuss their conversion request and the Final Assessment regarding their proposal. Staff and the owner have met on three occasions between August 1 and September 26 since Council deferred its consideration of the conversion request. In response to these discussions, which included the local Councillor, the owner provided staff with supplementary information and revised their development proposal. Staff have considered the supplementary information and revisions to the proposal and have

consulted further with Community Planning and Economic Development and Culture (EDC) staff.

The revised proposal now includes consideration of an expanded boundary of *Employment Area* lands which would be subject to the loss of employment lands through conversion if the request is supported. The proposal includes the introduction of residential high-rise tower elements (22+ storeys) above mid-rise structures on 2450 Finch Avenue West. In addition, the proposal includes on the 2450 Finch Avenue West lands the incorporation of increased non-residential development and a commitment to 8 percent of the residential units being affordable ownership units.

EDC staff have expressed concerns with respect to matters including impacts of a conversion on the land inventory in the *Employment Area*, the viability of the *Employment Area* and the compatibility of proposed residential uses with business establishments. Staff recommend that Council defer its decision on Conversion Request 104 further and direct staff to report to the November 8-10, 2023, meeting of City Council. A Final Assessment of the revised proposal will be prepared based on the completed analysis. Staff also recommend that Council ask staff to consider how the lands at 2444 Finch Avenue West and 4 Milvan Drive may be incorporated into an Official Plan Amendment respecting the conversion request and report to the Planning and Housing Committee. By considering these neighbouring lands, staff's review of Conversion Request 104 can take a comprehensive review of the entire block and plan for both increases in population and jobs within walking distance of the Finch West LRT station, in addition to securing affordable housing and other city building objectives.

Staff recommend Council continue to defer final consideration of this site for one additional cycle and request staff to consider the incorporation of lands to the east described as 2444 Finch Avenue West and 4 Milvan Drive.

#### **4. Conversion Request 049: 330 Queens Plate Drive**

This site is subject to a conversion request to redesignate the lands from *General Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* to permit residential development. The site is located in the Pearson International Airport Operating Area, within the 30 Noise Exposure Forecast (NEF) where residential development is prohibited by Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) 29 due to high noise levels. There are retail establishments to the north and south, offering various services and restaurants. Towards the east, the area is characterized by manufacturing activities, while to the west there is a mix of retail, service, and restaurant uses. Currently, the site includes retail and service uses and a fuel station. Staff recommend retaining the lands as *Employment Areas* and maintaining their designation as *General Employment Areas*.

Staff's original recommendation contained in report PH5.3 to the July Council meeting regarding Conversion Request 049 remains unchanged. The conversion request is not supported.

## **5. Conversion Request 080: 2200-2250 Islington Avenue**

This site is subject to a conversion request to redesignate the south part of the lands from *General Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* to permit residential uses. The site is located in the Pearson International Airport Operating Area, within the 30 NEF where residential development is prohibited by SASP 29 due to high noise levels. There are retail and service developments under construction on the northern portion of the lands. To the south are a network of highways, including Highway 409 and a Highway 401 on-ramp, with the Metrolinx Kitchener GO Corridor running adjacent to the site. Towards the east, there are additional Highway 401 access points, including an off-ramp, along with Islington Avenue and low-rise residential properties beyond. To the west, there are a mix of establishments, such as wholesale businesses, a cultural community center, a restaurant, offices, and utility and distribution facilities. Currently, the land holds permissions for food manufacturing, printing, warehousing, and office uses. Staff recommend retaining the lands as *Employment Areas* and maintaining their designation as *General Employment Areas*.

Local business XTL Transport Inc., a distribution establishment with over 800 employees, submitted a letter to City Council supporting staff's recommendations to retain this site as *Employment Areas*.

Staff's original recommendation contained in report PH5.3 to the July Council meeting regarding Conversion Request 080 remains unchanged. The conversion request is not supported.

### ***Employment Areas Conversion Tracking since 2013***

The approximately 150 conversion requests received as part of the current MCR amount to approximately 685 hectares of *Employment Area* lands or 8.5% of all *Employment Areas* across the city.

To date City Council has considered over 145 conversion requests in three final reports, which have resulted in staff recommending the conversion of over 60 conversion requests. The implementing Official Plan Amendments (OPA 591, OPA 644 and OPA 653) are before the Minister for a decision. Should the Minister approve the OPAs as adopted by Council, the total amount of *Employment Areas* remaining across the city is approximately 7,700 hectares or 12.1% of the City's land mass. This data reflects the changes made as a result of a pending Minister's decision on the current Municipal Comprehensive Review (through OPAs 591, 644 and 653), as well as previous Council decisions to accept settlements on appeals to OPA 231.

### **Next Steps**

This report reiterates the staff recommendations for four of the five deferred conversion requests and concludes the 2020 Municipal Comprehensive Review, except as it pertains to the following parcels of land, as recommended in this report:

- 388 Carlaw Avenue and 10 Dickens Street;

- Conversion Request 041 for 21 Don Roadway, 30 Booth Avenue, and 375 & 385 Eastern Avenue (East Harbour lands), except if City Council adopts the staff recommended Official Plan Amendment as part of item PH6.3;
- Conversion Request 114 for 301 Rockcliffe Boulevard;
- Conversion Request 070 for 825 Don Mills Road; and
- Conversion Request 104 for 2450 Finch Avenue West.

Given ongoing discussions with Economic Development and Culture staff respecting Conversion Request 104, staff recommend that Council defer consideration of this conversion request further and direct staff to report directly to the November 8-10, 2023 meeting of City Council. It is also recommended that staff be asked to consider how the lands at 2444 Finch Avenue West and 4 Milvan Drive can be incorporated into an Official Plan Amendment with respect to 2450 Finch Avenue West.

Conversion Request 114 for 301 Rockcliffe Boulevard, Conversion Request 070 for 825 Don Mills Road and the lands at 388 Carlaw Avenue and 10 Dicken Street will be the subject of a future staff report.

## **CONTACT**

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Jeffrey Cantos, Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Policy & Analysis, City Planning Division  
416-397-0244, [Jeffrey.Cantos@toronto.ca](mailto:Jeffrey.Cantos@toronto.ca)

Carola Perez-Book, Project Manager, Strategic Initiatives, Policy & Analysis, City  
Planning Division 416-392-8788, [Carola.Perez-Book@toronto.ca](mailto:Carola.Perez-Book@toronto.ca)

Kerri Voumvakis, Director, Strategic Initiatives, Policy & Analysis, City Planning Division  
416-392-8148, [Kerri.Voumvakis@toronto.ca](mailto:Kerri.Voumvakis@toronto.ca)

## **SIGNATURE**

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Gregg Lintern, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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