

## **Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Deferred Employment Area Conversion Request for 2450 Finch Avenue West - Final Report**

Date: November 7, 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 October 11-13, 2023 City Council meeting on item CC11.18 Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Five Deferred Employment Area Conversion Requests – Final Report. City Council deferred consideration of Conversion Request 104 for 2450 Finch Avenue West, and directed the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report to the November 8-10, 2023, meeting of City Council with a final recommendation for this conversion request.

This report recommends that Council convert the lands at 2450 Finch Avenue West from *General Employment Areas* to *Regeneration Areas* with a Site and Area Specific Policy that requires the provision of a minimum amount of employment gross floor area and affordable housing, and locating and identifying the appropriate size and location for a daycare to serve area employees and future residents.

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. City Council has considered over 145 conversion requests. Staff recommended the conversion of over 60 conversion requests which recommendations were supported by Council. The implementing Official Plan Amendments are currently awaiting a decision from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing as the approval authority for matters under the MCR.

Staff’s final recommendation on this conversion request was 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 MCR. This site was 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. New information has been provided on this site and as such staff are updating our recommendations on this conversion request.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. City Council adopt Official Plan Amendment 692 substantially-in-accordance with Attachment 1 to this report.
2. City Council authorize the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to seek approval of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing of Official Plan Amendment 692 under Section 26 of the Planning Act.
3. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to make such stylistic and technical changes to the recommended Official Plan Amendment 692 as may be required.
4. City Council declare by resolution to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that Official Plan Amendment 692 conforms with Provincial Plans or does not conflict with them; has regard to the matters of Provincial Interest in Section 2 of the Planning Act; and is consistent with policy statements issued under Subsection 3(1) of the Planning Act.
5. City Council request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to review Official Plan Amendment 692 under the current in effect Provincial Policy Statement 2020 and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2020.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report. The Interim 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.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-237567.pdf>

## Deferred Conversion Requests

At its meeting on October 11-13, 2023 City Council considered item CC11.18 Our Plan Toronto: Recommendations on Five Deferred Employment Area Conversion Requests – Final Report. City Council adopted staff recommendations to retain the lands subject to four of the five conversion requests, and further deferred consideration of Conversion Request 104 for 2450 Finch Avenue West. Council directed the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to report to the November 8-10, 2023 meeting of City Council with a final recommendation for this deferred conversion request.

City Council also requested City Planning staff to consider how the neighbouring properties at 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.

## Conversion Requests

Council declared the conclusion of the Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) at its meeting of July 10-20, 2023, except with respect to the following lands, which staff recommended be deferred <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.PH5.3>:

- 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.

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

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The Issue Background for this conversion request 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.  
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-237562.pdf>

## 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.  
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ph/bgrd/backgroundfile-237562.pdf>

## Deferred Conversion Request 104: 2450 Finch Avenue West

This site is subject to a conversion request submission that proposes to redesignate the property from *General Employment Areas* to *Mixed Use Areas* to permit residential development. Ten of the 11 industrial units on the lands are currently occupied by businesses with various uses including retail, commercial, service and automobile repair. The area immediately north of the lands are designated *Core Employment Area* uses and includes manufacturing, places of worship, distribution, automobile repair and office uses. Finch Avenue West is located immediately south of the lands, with a mix of retail uses abutting Finch Avenue West to the south and low-scale residential uses immediately south of these uses. East of the lands is a restaurant and a vacant property proposed to be developed with four-storey office building. To the west is the Duncanwoods Greenbelt ravine.

The lands are uniquely located within two Council-adopted Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs), the Milvan Rumike PMTSA and the Duncanwoods PMTSA. The Milvan Rumike and Duncanwoods stations serve LRT Line 6 – Finch West and this LRT project is currently under construction. The site is less than a 100-metre walk from the Milvan Rumike LRT stop, which provides access to Humber College to the west and the Finch West subway station on Line 1 (York-University).

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 held a number of meetings since Council deferred its consideration of the conversion request. In response to these discussions, which included the local Councillor and Economic Development and Culture (EDC) staff, the owner provided staff with supplementary information and revised their development proposal.

The revised development concept includes the introduction of residential buildings in different built forms with frontage on 2450 Finch Avenue West. In addition, the proposal includes the incorporation of increased non-residential development, a commitment to 10 percent of the residential units being affordable ownership units, and a daycare on the site.

Staff have considered the supplementary information and revisions to the proposal and have consulted further with Community Planning staff within City Planning, Children's Services, and EDC staff. A Final Assessment of the revised proposal can be found in Attachment 2. City Planning staff recommend that the lands be redesignated as *Regeneration Areas*, with a Site and Area Specific Policy to require a minimum requirements of employment gross floor area and affordable housing. It is City Planning's opinion that redesignation of the lands, which are located within a short walk to the LRT stop, to *Regeneration Areas* would support city building objectives of increased transit ridership and equitable reinvestment that will be examined through a local area study and managed process. This study will consider the local context and secure any necessary mitigation measures and separation to protect and preserve nearby lands designated *Employment Areas*.

The recommended redesignation to *Regeneration Areas* with a SASP would ensure future land uses are developed to be compatible with both the existing and planned

surrounding area uses. Any future sensitive land use permissions, including residential use permissions, would be located, designed, and buffered to mitigate impacts from, be compatible with, and not impede the continuation and the expansion of nearby employment uses.

Children's Services staff confirmed that Ward 7 (Humber River-Black Creek) is a high priority area for child care expansion. The proposed development represents a good opportunity to consider child care in this community. As part of the area study, staff will consider the appropriate size and location of a daycare on the lands. An Economic Development Strategy is recommended to be developed as part of the area study to identify opportunities for sustained employment and non-residential investment and recommend actions to attract business and support employment growth. The draft OPA is found in Attachment 1.

As noted in the Decision History above, Council directed staff to consider how the adjacent 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 Planning and Housing Committee. By considering these neighbouring lands, the staff 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.

### **Economic Development and Culture (EDC) Comments**

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. EDC has reviewed the revised proposal and while the applicant has submitted new information to city staff, EDC continues to support the original (June 2023) staff *Employment Area* retention recommendation. EDC are of the opinion that the fundamental reasonings made against the conversion of the lands for residential purposes remain relevant, including:

- The subject lands are contiguous and well positioned to continue to serve one of the City's most active, stable, functional, and economically important *Employment Areas*.
- Maintenance of a stable operating environment is one of the key policy objectives for *Employment Areas* and one of the most important pre-conditions for continued business investment decision making. A conversion here within a well-defined *Employment Area* negatively impacts business location, expansion or reinvestment decisions and has a destabilizing effect that extend well beyond a single property.
- EDC maintain the original staff opinion that reducing the inventory of *Employment Area* lands by converting the lands to permit residential uses would adversely affect the overall viability of the *Employment Area*.

The subject lands are designated *General Employment Areas* and now serve as a buffer from existing and potential impactful uses designated *Core Employment Areas* to the north. These subject lands are also located only 79 metres away from lands zoned

Employment Heavy Industrial Zone (EH). Lands zoned EH are amongst the rarest in the city and have a planned function to accommodate the heaviest or most noxious of uses including essential public works or city building functions such as recycling, waste transfer or concrete batching.

### ***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 almost 150 conversion requests in four 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 7700 hectares or 12% 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**

Following Council's decision on the recommendations contained in this report, if the recommended Official Plan Amendment is adopted, staff will prepare a submission package to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as the approval authority on conversion requests.

### **CONTACT**

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### **SIGNATURE**

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

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1: Recommended Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 692  
Attachment 2: Final Assessment for 2450 Finch Avenue West