

Attachment 2: Final Assessments and Recommendations on Requests to Convert Land Designated Employment Areas

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF CONVERSION REQUEST NO. 104

Address: 2450 Finch Avenue West (No. 104)

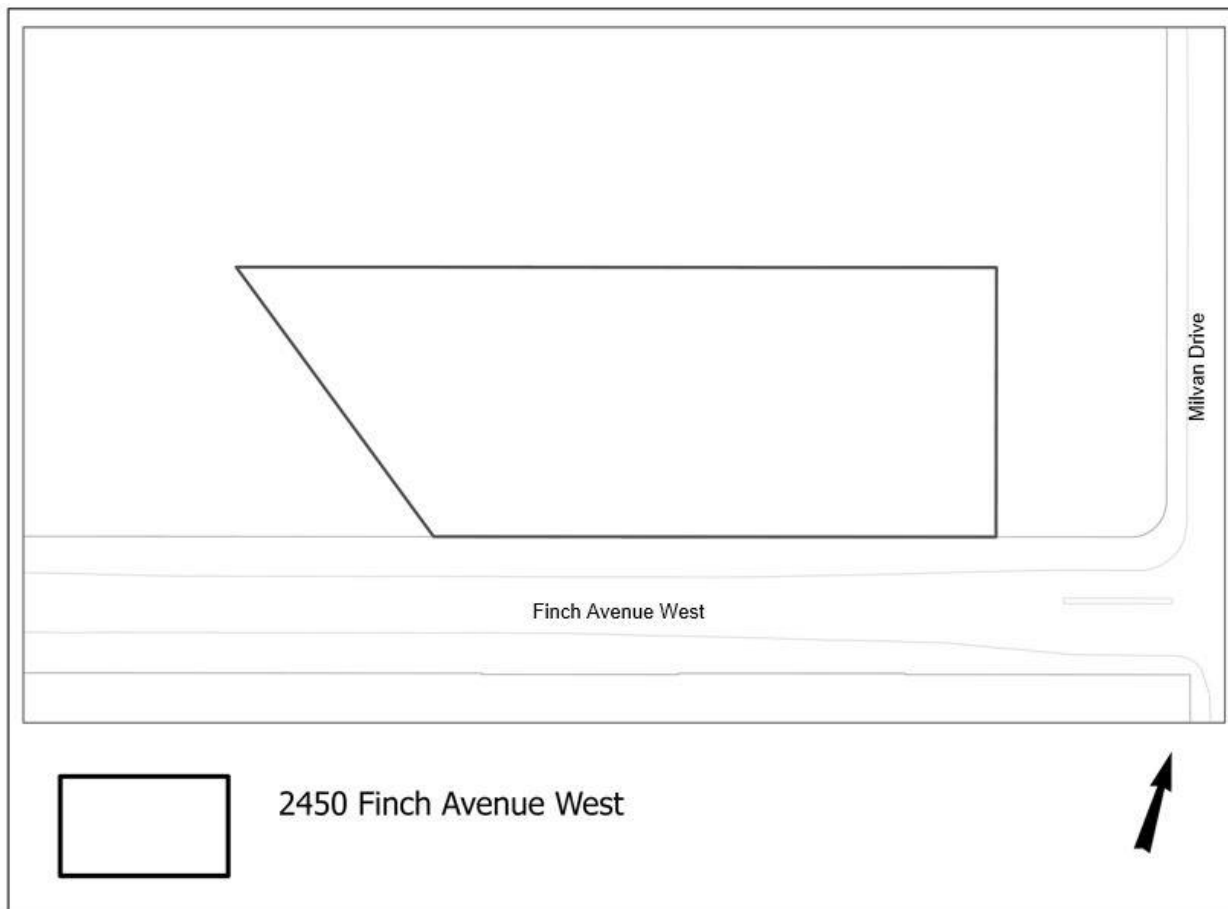
General area: Finch Avenue West and Weston Road

Ward: Humber River-Black Creek (7)

Owner (Applicants): 2450 Finch Avenue West Inc. (Walker, Nott, Dragicevic Associates Limited) (Bousfields Inc.)

Site area: Approximately 1.26 hectares (3.1 acres)

Existing uses: Retail, service, automobile repair, wholesaling, commercial school and a vacant unit.



CONVERSION REQUEST

Proposal: Request to redesignate the lands from *General Employment Areas* to *Regeneration Areas* to permit residential uses.

OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING FRAMEWORK

Urban Structure: *Employment Areas* (Map 2)

Designation(s): *General Employment Areas* (Map 13)

Area Specific Policies: N.A.

Zoning By-law: MC (7)(H) in the former City of North York Zoning By-law 7625

SITE CONTEXT AND ADJACENT USES

North: Manufacturing, place of worship, distribution, automobile repair, education and office

South: Finch Avenue West, with retail and low-scale residential beyond

East: Restaurant and proposed 4-storey office building (17 260616 WET 07 SA), with Milvan Drive, retail, service, restaurant, automobile repair and sales, carwash and a proposed fuel station beyond

West: Duncanwoods Greenbelt ravine

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 this conversion request; considered the conclusions of the Peer Review of the Compatibility/Mitigation Study and supplementary responses submitted by the applicant; consulted with the owner/applicant; and conducted site visits. In response to issues identified in the Preliminary Assessment and Peer Review, the applicant provided additional materials for review. The conversion request was changed after the July 19-20, 2023 meeting of City Council regarding compatibility and mitigation matters, the land use designation, affordable housing and minimum non-residential development. Staff have considered the revised conversion request and this Final Assessment provides staff's recommendations respecting Conversion Request No. 104 and completes the review of this conversion request.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

The lands are in the northern portion of the Highway 400 employment area. The Highway 400 employment area has one of the largest concentrations of land designated *Employment Areas* in the City. Highway 400 and Highway 401 provide superior access, making it attractive for the quick and efficient movement of goods for the many manufacturing logistic facilities located in this area. With over 32,000 jobs in 2022, employment has been stable since 2001, although the number of businesses has grown by 15% (over 2,100 businesses in 2022). The dominant sectors are Manufacturing, Transportation, Warehousing & Wholesale Trade and Construction. Four of the top five employers within this area of employment are manufacturers, including food processing, car parts production, pharmaceuticals and office furniture. The 2.51 million square metres of industrial space in 2021, was essentially fully occupied with less than 1% vacancy. Approximately \$421 million was invested in construction and alterations building permits for industrial/ commercial projects between 2016-2021, and there was over 126,000 square metres of new development in the pipeline, demonstrating the confidence that businesses have in this area.

Employment areas provide opportunities for Torontonians to live and work in the City. Fifty-three percent of the workers in this employment area live in the City of Toronto, and 45% 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 (34%) use a low-carbon mode of travel to work: 30% use transit, which is higher than the average for all areas of employment, while 4% walk or cycle. This employment area accommodates a range of modes of transport for those working in the area.

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. While there is no need to convert these lands to meet the Provincial population forecast for Toronto or to address an incompatibility of Employment Areas permissions with existing adjacent lands uses, a conversion from *General Employment Areas* to *Regeneration Areas* with a Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP) can provide an opportunity to plan for a complete community and manage the future development of the lands in the local context while increasing employment space and ensuring nearby lands designated for strictly employment uses are preserved and protected. Staff were directed to consider whether the two abutting properties east of the lands, at 2444 Finch Avenue West and 4 Milvan Drive, could contribute to a comprehensive planning framework for the lands along the north side of Finch Avenue West from Milvan Drive westward to the Duncanwoods Greenbelt ravine.

The lands are currently developed with a multi-unit industrial-commercial building, including a surface parking area fronting on Finch Avenue and loading and surface parking to the rear of the building. A coffee shop is located east of the lands at the northwest corner of Finch Avenue and Milvan Drive and known as 2444 Finch Avenue West. Also located east of the lands is a vacant property with a development application proposing a 4-storey office building. The lands are located on the southern portion of the *Employment Area* and fronting onto a major street shown on Map 3 of the Official Plan. The lands are part of a *General Employment Area* along the north side of Finch Avenue West, bound to the west by a ravine that is part of the natural heritage system. A redesignation to *Regeneration Areas* would provide an opportunity to identify protections and/or enhancements the natural heritage system. The *Employment Area* north of the lands are designated *Core Employment Areas*.

It is Planning staff's opinion that redesignation of the lands to *Regeneration Areas* would support reinvestment and growth through a local area study process considering the local context while protecting and preserving nearby lands designated *Employment Areas*. The proposed redesignation 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. A *Regeneration Area* would provide for reinvestment while ensuring the location maintains optimal access for goods movement in the *Employment Area*, transit accessibility and visibility for existing and future employment uses. A *Regeneration Area* designation would secure a minimum amount of employment gross floor area, which would represent an increase above what is existing on the lands, as well as a minimum amount of affordable housing. Children's Services staff have confirmed that Ward 7 is a high priority area for child care expansion. The proposed development represents a good opportunity to consider child care in this community. The local area study would also consider the potential of providing a daycare as part of the development, including determination of the need, location, and size.

Consultation with surrounding businesses has highlighted complaints received from nearby sensitive land uses regarding employment activities in the *Employment Area*, including compatibility issues with existing places of worship located immediately north of the lands within the *Employment Area*. The following concerns were raised by the businesses regarding the proposed residential conversion: setting a precedent for

permitting residential uses north of Finch Avenue West, future complaints, implications on the transportation network, impacts on the operation of facilities, and loss of employment lands particularly for those business types that depend on a clustering effect of related support industries/businesses.

A Compatibility/Mitigation ("C/M") Study was required to support each conversion request and peer reviewed. The submitted Compatibility/Mitigation ("C/M") Study indicated that there is limited potential for odour, dust, air emission and noise nuisance issues to impact the lands from surrounding facilities due to the establishments that currently exist in the area. The study concluded that there are no Class I, II or III facilities located within minimum separation distances, and that there are no off-site sources that have potential to cause adverse effects.

The Peer Review of the C/M Study determined that required information and assessment was not provided with respect to the following: analysis and recommendation of mitigation measures, impact on the surrounding employment areas and major facilities and vice versa, and addressing potential air, noise, and vibration impacts. Further, that existing land use conflicts cannot be determined until complaint history is obtained from the surrounding area. The Peer Reviewer was not able to confirm that the C/M Studies fulfil 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*.

A subsequent submission by the applicant provided some additional study work to identify facilities that had not been appropriately identified. This subsequent information was reviewed by staff but was provided once the Peer Review period had been completed. An updated Compatibility and Mitigation study is required as part of the local area study to inform where sensitive land uses, including new residential uses will be located, including any necessary mitigation measures required to facilitate the development. It will also inform how the uses are designed, and buffered to mitigate impacts from, be compatible with and not impede the continuation of and the expansion of existing employment uses and any new employment uses within the surrounding *Core Employment Areas* and *General Employment Areas*.

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. Council adopted these two PMTSAs, which was subsequently forwarded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval on July 29, 2022, as the approval authority for MTSA's, and to date, no decision has been received. The Growth Plan 2020 minimum density targets for PMTSA/MTSA's are targets for jobs, as well as residents. Existing and permitted development within the PMTSA is planned for and meets a minimum population and employment target of 160 residents and jobs combined per hectare. The Growth Plan 2020 minimum density targets for PMTSA/MTSA's are targets for jobs, as well as residents. Approximately 30% 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 proposed SASP directs a significant

increase in employment space, supports a diverse range of employment opportunities and the potential to intensify development on the lands.

A *Regeneration Areas* designation is appropriate for the lands to support reinvestment and growth on a site that is within two PMTSAs and 100 metres away from the Milvan Rumike LRT stop through a process that considers the local context, including that future development is compatible development with surrounding land uses. The potential inclusion of the two easterly abutting properties (4 Milvan Avenue and 2444 Finch Avenue West) could help develop a comprehensive planning framework for north side of Finch Avenue West, from Milvan Avenue to the ravine. The proposed redesignation with a SASP would ensure future land uses on the *Regeneration Area* are compatible with existing and planned uses to the north that are designated *Employment Areas*. The recommended SASP would require:

- the preparation of a planning framework within a SASP for the *Regeneration Area* lands to ensure the development of a complete community, including the provision of any required community infrastructure, including a daycare to support new residential uses and area employees;
- a minimum of 20 per cent of the total gross floor area (GFA) be employment gross floor area;
- an Economic Development Strategy/Study to identify opportunities for sustained employment and non-residential investment, including actions to attract businesses and support employment growth
- a minimum of 10 percent of the total new residential GFA be secured as affordable ownership housing or a minimum of 8 percent be affordable rental housing; and
- residential and any other sensitive land uses to be located, designed and buffered to mitigate impacts from, be compatible with, and not impede:
 - the continuation of and the expansion of existing employment uses; and
 - any new employment uses within the surrounding *Employment Areal*.

While the applicant has submitted new information to City staff, Economic Development and Culture (EDC) continues to support the original (June 2023) staff refusal/retention recommendation and are of the opinion that the fundamental reasonings made against the conversion of the lands for residential purposes remain relevant.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff reviewed Conversion Request No. 104 (2450 Finch Avenue West) against the policies of the PPS 2020, the Growth Plan 2020, and the Official Plan and recommend that the lands be redesignated from *General Employment Areas* to *Regeneration Areas* with a SASP. The designation sets out the requirements for a planning framework, and the SASP secures requirements for affordable housing, employment gross floor area, and other city building objectives.