

Our Plan Toronto: Employment Area Conversion Requests Status Update

Date: April 13, 2023

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: All

SUMMARY

City Council authorized the commencement of the city's Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR), 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, some of which were City-initiated. City Planning and Economic Development and Culture staff continue to review these requests to convert *Employment Areas*.

The first group of 30+ conversion requests recommendations were adopted by City Council in July 2022, and is currently with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval, as the approval authority for conversion requests. On September 12, 2022, the City received confirmation from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that he suspended the 120-day time period to make a decision on the Council-adopted 30+ conversion requests. To date, the City has not received a Ministerial decision.

This report provides an update on the approximately 117 remaining conversion requests, which are mapped and listed in Attachment 1 to this report. It also provides an update on staff's review of Site and Area-Specific Policies on *Employment Areas* that currently permit residential uses. The report includes information on recent engagement and consultation, next steps and timing for the final report including an Official Plan Amendment.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in the report in the current budget year or in future years.

DECISION HISTORY

City-wide Employment Policies and Conversion Requests (first batch)

At its meeting on July 19 - 22, 2022, Council adopted Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 591, with amendments, as part of a phased Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) and Growth Plan Conformity Exercise.

OPA 591 amends:

- Official Plan Economic Health and Employment Area policies;
- Site or Area Specific Policies resulting from local area studies (Update Downsview, Keele St. Clair Local Area Study, Geary Works and Picture Mount Dennis Planning Framework Study), and
- Certain land use designation changes resulting from the review of Official Plan Amendment applications and conversion requests.

Staff also reported that the next MCR phase, which includes the remaining *Employment Area* conversion requests would go to Planning and Housing Committee in Q1 of 2023.

Staff were also directed to consider potential and appropriate Official Plan Amendment(s) that could expand permitted uses in *Employment Areas* (site or area specific only) to include sport facilities, places of assembly (including bingo halls and banquet halls), and places of worship and report back to the Planning and Housing Committee in the second quarter of 2023.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.PH35.15>

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is currently reviewing OPA 591 as the approval authority on these matters. On September 12, 2022, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing used their authority pursuant to the Planning Act to suspend the [120-day decision making timeline](#) for OPA 591. As such, it is unknown at this time if the Minister will approve OPA 591 as adopted by Council or if the OPA will be modified.

COMMENTS

Equity Impact Statement

Employment Areas play an important role in accommodating a range of businesses including those that offer attainable employment opportunities for people of various education levels and skill sets. Staff continue to apply the equity lens while reviewing each conversion request.

Conversion Request Process and Requirements

Growth Plan Policy 2.2.5.9 permits the conversion of Employment Areas through a MCR and lists the tests that need to be considered before any conversion of lands designated as *Core* or *General Employment Areas*. The City's Official Plan Policies

2.2.4.14 to 2.2.4.18 provide Conversion and Removal Policies for Employment Areas in addition to the conversion policies of the Growth Plan.

Official Plan policies clarify that the following proposals are also considered to be conversions:

- A redesignation of land from an Employment Area designation to any other designation;
- The introduction of a use that is otherwise not permitted in an Employment Area;
- The introduction of a use that may be permitted in a *General Employment Area* into a *Core Employment Area*; and,
- A redesignation of a *Core Employment Area* into a *General Employment Area*.

Applying these Council approved and Ontario Land Tribunal approved policies, staff are completing Final Assessments and recommendations for the remaining conversion requests, which will be the subject of an upcoming Final Report that includes:

- Staff's summary of the request;
- Site and locational characteristics, including details of the area of employment and nearby community services and facilities and infrastructure;
- Findings from the engagement process;
- Findings from the compatibility/mitigation studies and peer review process;
- Discussion of relevant and applicable policies; and
- Staff's recommendation, which would include any of the following:
 - conversion of the lands to a different land use designation with or without a Site and Area Specific policy (SASP) in the Official Plan,
 - retaining the lands as the current land use,
 - retaining the lands as the current land use but adding a SASP; or
 - deferring consideration of a conversion request with reasons for the deferral.

Compatibility/Mitigation Studies and Peer Reviews

As part of the supporting material for conversion requests, Compatibility/Mitigation Studies were required, which provide the following information: Description of land use compatibility between sensitive land uses and employment uses, listing and evaluation of mitigation options to achieve appropriate design, buffering and/or separation distance; and recommendations as to methods to secure the recommended mitigation options.

At each proponent's expense, each proponent submitted a Compatibility/Mitigation Study, which was peer reviewed by the City. The objective of the peer review was to provide Council with independent, expert, third party assessments of the potential land use compatibility issues as well as proposed mitigation measures for each site that was subject of a conversion request.

Engagement - Update

Upon receipt of each conversion request, staff prepared a Preliminary Assessment of each for the purpose of consultation with stakeholders and the public. Staff have undertaken significant engagement including meetings and discussions with the proponent and their representatives, neighbouring businesses, major facility operators, industry, businesses organizations, Torontonians, and other interested stakeholders.

Prior to the final Statutory Public Meeting report being considered at Planning and Housing Committee, staff will hold the statutory public open houses to discuss any recommended changes to land use designations and SASPs. The draft OPA will also be posted online for public information and feedback ahead of the statutory public meeting.

Concurrent with the review of conversion requests, staff have undertaken a city-wide engagement program under the banner, "Our Plan Toronto." This engagement program included Indigenous engagement focused on building relationships with Indigenous Rights Holders, businesses, and organizations and understanding Indigenous planning perspectives. Since the June 2022 Indigenous engagement summary [report](#), staff have continued to meet with Indigenous groups, including the City's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee.

Emerging Policy Considerations – Regeneration Areas Update

Regeneration Areas are a land use designation for growth that is intended to accommodate an increase in **both** jobs and population. *Regeneration Areas* will provide for a broad mix of commercial, residential, light industrial, parks and open space, institutional, live/work and utility uses in an urban form.

As part of OPA 231 (previous MCR approved in 2013) and OPA 591 (first batch of conversion requests approved in 2022), staff recommended *Regeneration Areas* as the land use designation for sites or clusters of conversion requests that tend to be larger in terms of land area and tend to have multiple owners. The nature of these areas necessitates a comprehensive approach to planning as opposed to piecemeal planning on a site-by-site application basis. This is especially important given the coordination of infrastructure that might be required to support new land uses.

There are positive precedents for *Regeneration Areas* across the city, which were City Council supported and/or Tribunal approved, including the former Celestica site, the Christie's site, and Downsview lands, for which new planning frameworks were adopted by Council (Celestica and Christie's) or underway (Downsview) that envision complete communities and that were not previously planned for residential uses, including the provision of affordable housing.

For both the previous and upcoming conversions to *Regeneration Areas* land use designation, the resulting new planning frameworks can identify which lands should revert back to *Employment Areas* from *Regeneration Areas* to preserve the economic function of the lands and other appropriate land use designations such as *Mixed Use Areas*. The required study will respond to the local context and specific needs of the area. Not all *Regeneration Areas* will have the same mix of uses or development

policies. Staff are considering the merits of additional conversions to *Regeneration Areas* of some of the conversion requests.

Tracking Conversions - Update

The approximately 150 conversion requests received represent approximately 685 hectares of Employment Area lands or 8.5% of all Employment Areas across the city. Of these 150 conversion requests, 55 requests or approximately 37% are within Provincially Significant Employment Zones (PSEZs) identified in the Growth Plan. Council directed staff to provide a cumulative total of employment-designated lands gained or lost to the successive conversion reports brought to Council through OPA 231 (previous MCR), OPA 591 (first batch of conversion requests), and the Official Plan Amendment in response to the remaining conversion requests.

OPA 591 (First batch of conversion requests)

The 30+ conversion requests that Council adopted in July 2022 (OPA 591) represent the conversion of approximately 65 hectares of Employment Areas to other land use designations. Of these 65 hectares, approximately 54 hectares were designated as *General Employment Areas*, while almost 13 hectares were designated *Core Employment Areas*. OPA 591 recommendations converted:

- two thirds of the land area to *Regeneration Areas*;
- just over a quarter to *Mixed Use Areas*; and
- Approximately 10% to *Parks, Institutional or General Employment Areas*.

Should the Minister approve OPA 591 as adopted by Council, the total amount of Employment Areas remaining across the city is approximately 7,800 hectares or 12.3% 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 OPA 591), as well as previous Council decisions to accept settlements on appeals to the previous MCR (through OPA 231).

Staff will provide a further update on the cumulative total of *Employment Areas* gained or lost in our next report with Final Assessment recommendations.

Site and Area Specific Policy 154 - Update

The Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan require municipalities to prohibit residential uses in employment areas. OPA 591 introduced a new policy to prohibit residential uses on lands designated *Core Employment Areas* and *General Employment Areas*. Fourteen Site and Area Specific Policies (SASP) in Official Plan Chapter 7 currently permit residential uses on lands that are designated *Core Employment Areas* or *General Employment Areas*. The fourteen SASPs primarily reflect permissions which had existed in the Official Plans of the pre-amalgamation municipalities.

Given the potential conflict between the land use permissions in these SASPs and the Provincial requirements to prohibit residential uses in Employment Areas, staff are finalizing our review to resolve these conflicts. Options include redesignating the lands

to another designation that permits residential uses, or deleting the SASP that permits the residential uses on lands designated Employment Areas.

In considering each of these SASP, staff analyzed existing and proposed uses, surrounding land uses and permissions, location and size of the lands, proximity to major facilities, including rail corridors, rail yards, impactful industry and other site-specific considerations. Staff's final recommendations for these lands will be provided as part of the final report on the remaining conversion requests.

Appeals to the 2013 MCR - Update

Council adopted the previous MCR (OPA 231) in December 2013. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approved OPA 231, with minor modifications in July 2014 and 178 appeals were made to the Tribunal. The Tribunal has approved significant portions of OPA 231, including a number of Council-adopted site specific settlements. The Tribunal has not yet considered appeals to office replacement policies and over 70 site and area specific appeals. The remaining site specific appellants collectively requested over 300 hearing days.

Next Steps and Timing - Update

Staff are finalizing their review of the 117 remaining conversion requests and drafting final recommendations. Attachment 1 to this report maps and lists the remaining conversion requests. Previously, the Final Report was initially targeted for consideration at the April 27, 2023 Planning and Housing Committee meeting.

For a number of reasons, including the lack of a Ministerial decision on OPA 591, staff are proposing two Final Reports targeted for the June and July meetings of Planning and Housing Committee. Attachment 1 to this report also outlines to which Committee meeting each conversion request will be reported. Staff notified proponents of the change in timing in early March and that additional report timing would be provided. This report provides the updated timing of the Final Report.

Concurrent with the review of the conversion requests, staff commenced work on addressing the direction from Council to consider expanding the permitted uses in Employment Areas to include sport facilities, places of assembly, and places of worship. A report back on this matter to the Planning and Housing Committee is anticipated in September 2023.

CONTACT

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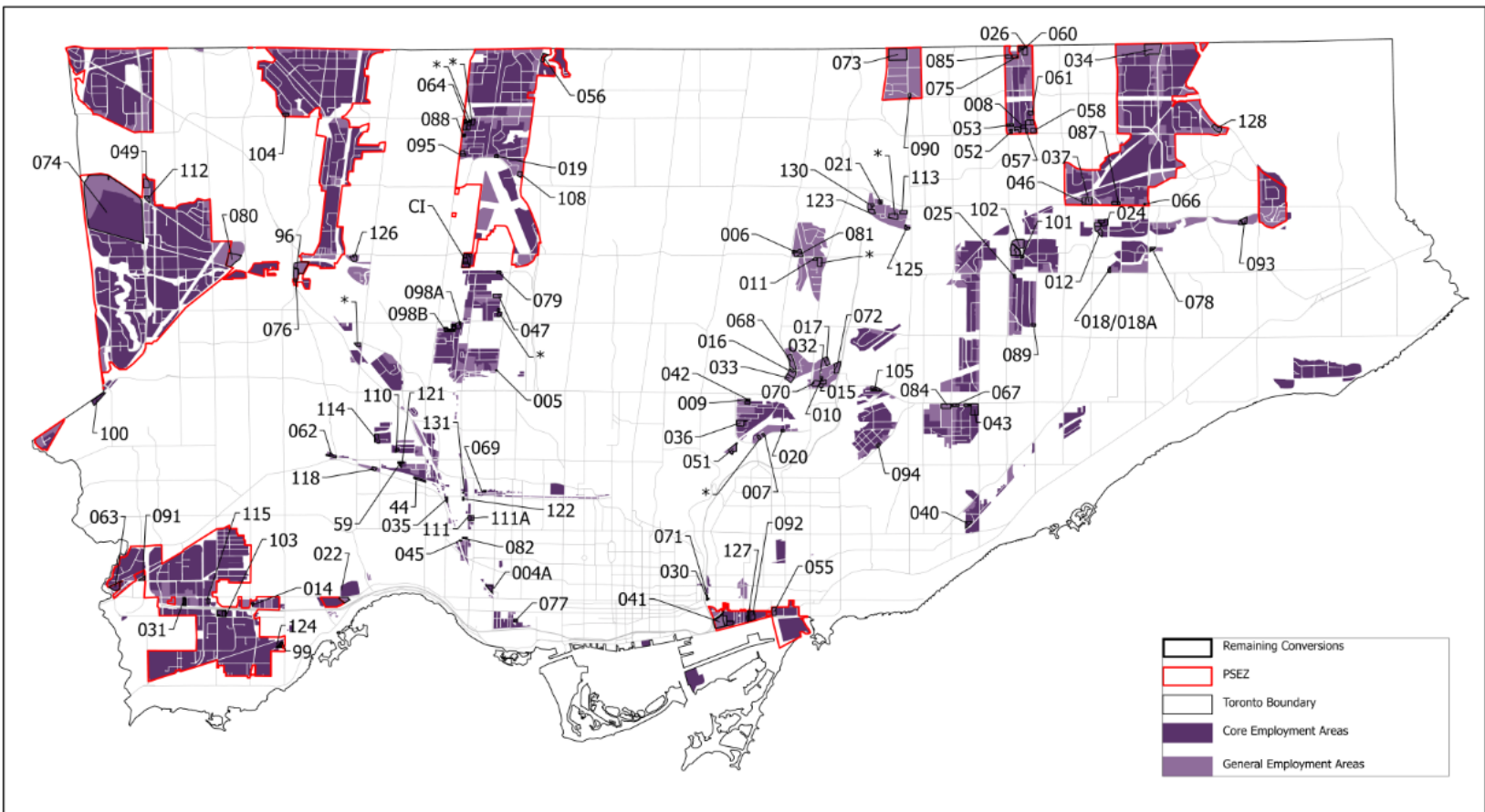
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Map and Table of Remaining Conversion Requests

TORONTO Remaining Conversion Requests



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▲ Data Source: Open Data Toronto, Government of Ontario City Planning - April 2023

Tracking No.	Address	Final Report Timing (Target PHC)	Ward	Ward Name	Ward Councillor
49	Queens Plate Drive, 330	July 5	1	Etobicoke North	Councillor Vincent Crisanti (4)
74	Rexdale Boulevard, 555	July 5			
80	Islington Avenue, 2200-2250	July 5			
112	Queens Plate Drive, 160	July 5			
100	Eglinton Avenue West, 5395 - 5409	July 5	2	Etobicoke Centre	Councillor Stephen Holyday (1)
14	Islington Avenue, 871	June 1	3	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Councillor Amber Morley (9)
22	The Queensway, 125	June 1	3		
31	The Queensway, 1543-1551 and Fordhouse Boulevard, 66, 70 & 76	June 1	3		
63	Manstor Road, 51	June 1	3		
91	North Queen Street, 162 (South Portion)	June 1	3		
99	Royal York Road, 266 and 268	July 5	3		
103	Evans Avenue, 340-364 and Arnold Street 12-16	July 5	3		
115	The Queensway, 1377 (Incomplete – Peer Review)	Incomplete	3		
124	Drummond Street, 12-50 and Harold Street, 1, 1a and 1b	July 5	3		
44	Vine Avenue, 36-162	June 1	4	Parkdale-High Park	Councillor Gord Perks (2)
118	Dundas Street West, 3400-3422	June 1	4		
59	Ryding Avenue, 116R, 126-142	July 5	5	York South-Weston	Councillor Frances Nunziata (10)
62	Scarlett Road, 2 and Eileen Avenue, 201	July 5	5		
76	Weston Road, 2549, 2545	July 5	5		
96	Weston Road, 2625	July 5	5		
098A (Council Initiated "CI")	Lawrence Avenue West, 1235-1255 and Benton Road, 3-16, 22	July 5	5		

Tracking No.	Address	Final Report Timing (Target PHC)	Ward	Ward Name	Ward Councillor
098B (CI)	Colville Road, 44-88	July 5	5		
110	Symes Road, 100 (Incomplete – Peer Review)	Incomplete	5		
114	Rockcliffe Boulevard, 301	July 5	5		
121	Ryding Avenue, 109	July 5	5		
*	Denison Road East, 55 (Incomplete)	Incomplete	5		
19	Chesswood Drive, 3710	July 5	6	York Centre	Councillor James Pasternak (9)
56	Dufferin Street, 4925-5201	June 1	6		
64	Keele Street, 3897-3931, Toro Road, 14-20, Tangiers Road, 20-26	June 1	6		
88	Keele Street, 3765-3777 and Lepage Court, 10	July 5	6		
95	Keele Street, 3675-3685	June 1	6		
108	Kodiak Crescent, 5-15	July 5	6		
CI	949, 949A, 951, 953, 955 and 1011 Wilson Avenue	July 5	6		
*	Tangiers Road, 17, 25 (Incomplete)	Incomplete	6		
*	Tangiers Road, 30 (Incomplete)	Incomplete	6		
104	Finch Avenue West, 2450	July 5	7		
126	Wilson Avenue, 1677	July 5	7		
5	Dufferin Street, 2482, 2486, 2488 and Castlefield Avenue, 1120	June 1	8	Eglinton-Lawrence	Councillor Mike Colle (4)
47	Orfus Road, 38	July 5	8		
79	Bridgeland Avenue, 100	June 1	8		
*	Apex Road, 48-50, 53 and Lawrence Avenue West, 950 (Incomplete)	Incomplete	8		

Tracking No.	Address	Final Report Timing (Target PHC)	Ward	Ward Name	Ward Councillor
004A (CI)	Alma Avenue, 50	June 1	9	Davenport	Councillor Alejandra Bravo (8)
35	Dupont Street, 1655	July 5	9		
69	Geary Avenue, 322-328, 330	June 1	9		
82	Sterling Road, 211, 213	Incomplete	9		
111	Paton Road, 60	July 5	9		
111A (CI)	Lansdowne Avenue, 640	July 5	9		
122	Campbell Avenue, 300, Dupont St, 1485-1491	Incomplete	9		
131	Campbell Avenue, 350	July 5	9		
77	East Liberty Street, 171 , Hanna Avenue, 37	July 5	10	Spadina-Fort York	Councillor Ausma Malik (1)
30	Davies Avenue, 11	June 1	14	Toronto-Danforth	Councillor Paula Fletcher (7)
38	Davies Avenue, 9, Queen Street, 600 and Carroll Street, 16	July 5	14		
41	Don Roadway, 21, Booth Avenue, 30 and Eastern Avenue, 375 & 385	July 5	14		
55	Leslie Street, 17	June 1	14		
71	Davies Avenue, 33, 39	June 1	14		
92	Eastern Avenue, 629, 633, and 675	June 1	14		
127	Heward Avenue, 65-87	June 1	14		
7	Overlea Boulevard, 26	June 1	15		
9	Brentcliffe Road, 20	July 5	15		
20	Overlea Boulevard, 60	June 1	15		
36	Laird Drive, 85 & 115	June 1	15		
42	Vanderhoof Avenue, 105-109 and Brentcliffe Road, 10	June 1	15		
51	Redway Road, 11	June 1	15		
*	Overlea Boulevard, 14-16, Banigan Drive, 7-11 (Incomplete)	Incomplete	15		
6	York Mills Road, 808 and Leslie Street, 1859	June 1	16	Don Valley East	Councillor Jon
10	Wynford Drive, 20	June 1	16		

Tracking No.	Address	Final Report Timing (Target PHC)	Ward	Ward Name	Ward Councillor
11	York Mills Road, 861	June 1	16		Burnside (14)
15	Gervais Drive, 15	July 5	16		
16	Leslie Street, 1123	July 5	16		
17	Green Belt Drive, 33	June 1	16		
32	Wynford Drive, 39	July 5	16		
33	Leslie Street, 1121	July 5	16		
68	Leslie Street, 1125-1155	July 5	16		
70	Don Mills Road, 825	July 5	16		
72	Wynford Drive, 100	June 1	16		
81	Coldwater Road, 25 - 49	June 1	16		
105	Eglinton Avenue East, 1681-1725, Mobile Drive, 20-32, Credit Union Drive, 1	June 1	16		
*	York Mills Road, 865 (Incomplete)	Incomplete	16		
21	Yorkland Boulevard, 279 and 285	June 1	17	Don Valley North	Councillor Shelley Carroll (7)
73	Steeles Avenue East, 3125-3389 and Victoria Park Avenue, 4000	June 1	17		
113	Lansing Square, 2,4, 6 and Victoria Park Avenue, 2550	June 1	17		
123	Yorkland Boulevard, 185	June 1	17		
125	Hallcrown Place , 55	June 1	17		
130	Yorkland Boulevard, 235, 245	June 1	17		
*	Consumers Road, 280-422 (Incomplete)	Incomplete	17		
94	O'Connor Drive, 1100	June 1	19	Beaches-East York	Councillor Brad Bradford (1)
40	Milne Avenue, 55	June 1	20	Scarborough Southwest	Councillor Gary Crawford (4)
43	Eglinton Avenue East, 2001, 2007, 2043, and 2201	June 1	20		

Tracking No.	Address	Final Report Timing (Target PHC)	Ward	Ward Name	Ward Councillor
67	Eglinton Avenue East, 1941	June 1	20		
84	Eglinton Avenue East, 1911 and 1921	June 1	20		
25	Ellesmere Road, 1001	July 5	21	Scarborough Centre	Councillor Michael Thompson (4)
89	Midland Avenue, 1530-1536	June 1	21		
101	William Kitchen Road, 1, 11-37, 12, 16, 20-26	July 5	21		
102	Kennedy Road, 2021	July 5	21		
8	Midland Avenue, 3266, 3280, 3290, 3330 and Silver Star Boulevard, 50, 70	July 5	22	Scarborough -Agincourt	Councillor Nick Mantas (11)
26	Steeles Avenue East, 4711, 4723, 4733, and 4751	July 5	22		
52	Finch Avenue East, 4016 & 4020	July 5	22		
53	Kennedy Road, 2901-2913, Trojan Gate, 21, Finch Avenue East, 4040, and Milliken Boulevard, 15-19	July 5	22		
57	Finch Avenue East, 4140	July 5	22		
58	Finch Avenue East, 4186-4190	July 5	22		
60	Silver Star Boulevard, 681	July 5	22		
61	Midland Avenue, 3360	July 5	22		
75	Redlea Avenue, 29	July 5	22		
85	Kennedy Road, 3447	July 5	22		
90	Victoria Park Avenue, 3601	July 5	22		
12	McCowan Road, 1455-1457 and Milner Avenue, 41-47	June 1	23	Scarborough North	Councillor Jamaal Myers (7)
24	Milner Avenue, 30 and 44	June 1	23		
34	Steeles Avenue East, 5975 - 6025	June 1	23		

Tracking No.	Address	Final Report Timing (Target PHC)	Ward	Ward Name	Ward Councillor
37	Sheppard Avenue East, 4630	July 5	23		
46	Sheppard Avenue East, 4570	July 5	23		
66	Sheppard Avenue East, 5080	June 1	23		
87	Sheppard Avenue East, 4800-4830	June 1	23		
18	Ellesmere Road, 1774	July 5	24	Scarborough -Guildwood	Councillor Paul Ainslie (3)
018A (CI)	Ellesmere Road, 1760	July 5	24		
78	Progress Avenue, 920-930	July 5	24		
93	Milner Avenue, 799	June 1	25	Scarborough -Rouge Park	Councillor Jennifer McKelvie (2)
128	Morningside Avenue, 2270	June 1	25		

CI = Council initiated