



**MORE NEIGHBOURS  
TORONTO**

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

**RE: EX15.1 - East Harbour Transit Oriented Communities Proposal: Conclusion of Negotiations and Draft Plan of Subdivision, and Approach to Next Stage**

***About More Neighbours Toronto***

[More Neighbours Toronto](#) is a volunteer-only organization of housing advocates that believe in building more multi-family homes of all kinds for those who dream of building their lives in Toronto. We advocate for reforms to increase our city's ability to build more homes in every neighbourhood. We are a big-tent organization with members across the political spectrum who are committed to counterbalancing the anti-housing agenda that has dominated Toronto's politics, created an affordability crisis, and cost burdened a new generation of aspiring residents. We are firmly committed to the principle that housing is a human right and believe Toronto should be inclusive and welcoming to all.

***Position***

More Neighbours Toronto encourages the City of Toronto and Cadillac Fairview to work together to provide more housing, including more affordable housing at the East Harbour site. The changes in use at East Harbour reflect a broader trend in the City of Toronto. We encourage the Executive Committee to consider how a similar introduction of residential uses may stabilize office parks across the city that are struggling with record high vacancy rates.

***The New Normal***

Toronto's economic success is, in no small measure, tied to its ability to head offices for Canadian and international business. The City's official plan as confirmed by the recent Municipal Comprehensive Review designates large segments of the City's employment lands for office purposes. These office parks have historically been a place that attracted talent from across the city and across the globe. However, the nature of office work has changed. Before

the pandemic, the City of Toronto, through its Modern TO program, identified the opportunity to reduce overhead costs by moving to a hybrid work model. Many Toronto businesses were undertaking similar initiatives. However, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated the adoption of hybrid and fully remote work models. According to CBRE's Q1 2024 report, office vacancy in the city sits at 19.2%. Class A vacancy is at a similar 18.8%. Given that many office leases were signed either before the pandemic or in its early stages when a full return to work was contemplated, these levels are expected to remain high for decades to come. The completion of the nearly 5 million additional square feet will add to this excess of office space in our city. The approved plan for East Harbour, which contemplates the development of a new office park, was developed before this massive change in the office leasing market. More Neighbours Toronto supports the staff recommendations to negotiate increased residential uses at East Harbour while maintaining the dense built form contemplated for office uses.

***Office uses do not require protection***

Toronto's employment lands are rightly viewed as a valuable asset which allow Toronto to attract employers in a wide range of industries from manufacturing to film. These lands require protection to avoid any conflict with residential neighbourhoods. However, while a large majority of Toronto's manufacturing jobs exist within employment lands, the situation is very different for office work. Office buildings are not incompatible residential buildings. They can and do share space in neighbourhoods across the city. The City has seen in recent decades an explosion of residential uses in our Downtown core in areas which used to be exclusively commercial. It hasn't harmed our Downtown. In fact, it has made our Downtown more resilient. Residents provide an additional customer base for small businesses that have traditionally served office workers. They ensure the neighbourhood remains vibrant and safe in the evenings and on weekends. More Neighbours Toronto encourages the Executive Committee to consider how this model, now being pursued at East Harbour, can be replicated in office parks across the City that are struggling with high vacancy rates. The City should leave no stone unturned in trying to solve our housing crisis.

Regards,

Aaron Ginsberg

More Neighbours Toronto