

# PH14.1 – Employment Area Land Use Permissions – Decision Report

Planning & Housing Committee

July 11, 2024



# Purpose

- Discuss the purpose and intent of the recommended Official Plan Amendment 680
- Conclude the Expanding Uses in Employment Areas Study

# Agenda

1. Provincial changes
2. Toronto's finite land resource
3. Staff's recommended approach
4. Recommended Policy changes
5. Future employment area conversions
6. Expanding Uses in Employment Areas
7. Staff rationale
8. Next steps

# Provincial changes

Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act (Bill 97) amended the *Planning Act* by:

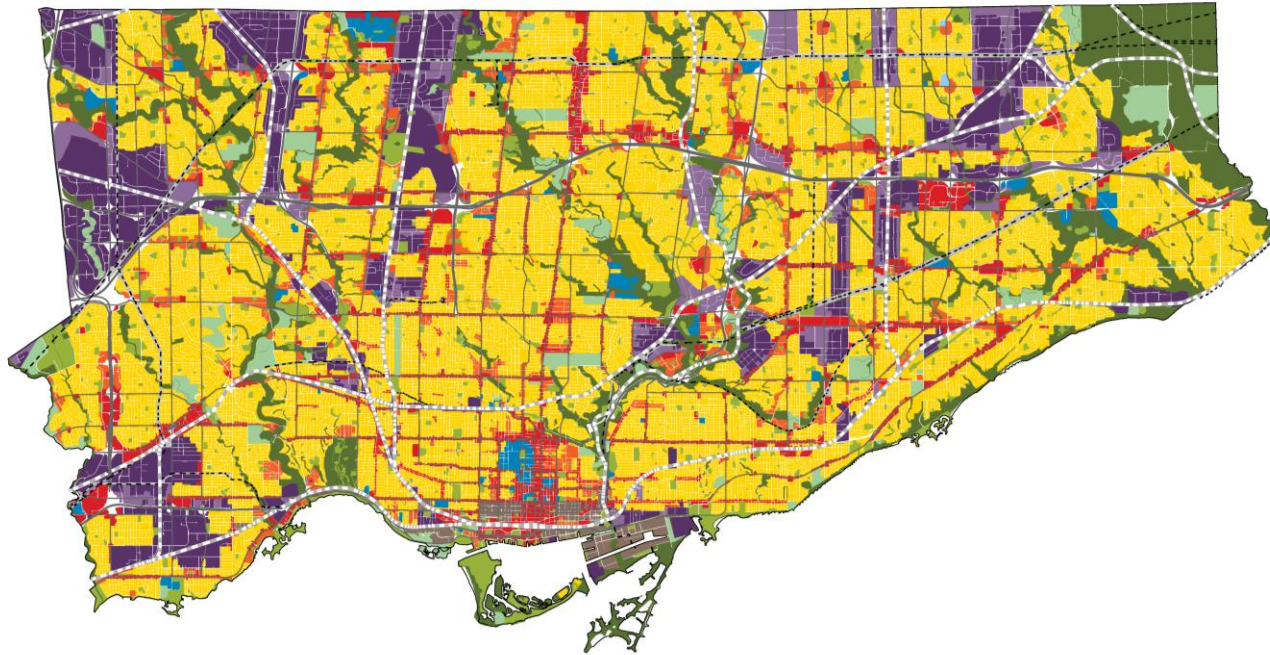
- Introducing a new definition for “Area of Employment” that removes commercial and institutional uses
- Allows municipalities to transition “lawfully established” uses that no longer meet the new definition

## Provincial Guidance to municipalities

“Time-sensitive official plan updates will be needed to align with the new definition....to maintain the integrity of employment areas that are to remain protected over the long-term...”

*ERO #019-6813 April 6, 2023*

# Toronto's finite land resource



## Land Use Designations

- Neighbourhoods
- Apartment Neighbourhoods
- Mixed Use Areas
- Institutional Areas
- Natural Areas
- Parks
- Other Open Space Areas (Including Golf Courses, Cemeteries, Public Utilities)
- General Employment Areas
- Core Employment Areas
- Utility Corridors

**Official Plan land use designations that do not permit residential uses**

- Employment Areas = 12%

# Staff's recommended approach

To maintain the integrity of employment areas that are to remain protected over the long-term, staff are proposing a 2-phased approach

## Phase 1: Transition 'lawfully established uses'

- **July 2023:** Council adopted OPA 668 intended to provide a level of land use certainty to permitted uses that no longer meet the provincial definition



## Phase 2: Align Official Plan policies with Planning Act

- **July 2024:** Council to consider OPA 680 intended to align the City's Official Plan with the new definition that allows a managed approach to employment land conversions

# Recommended Policy changes

## Official Plan Amendment 680

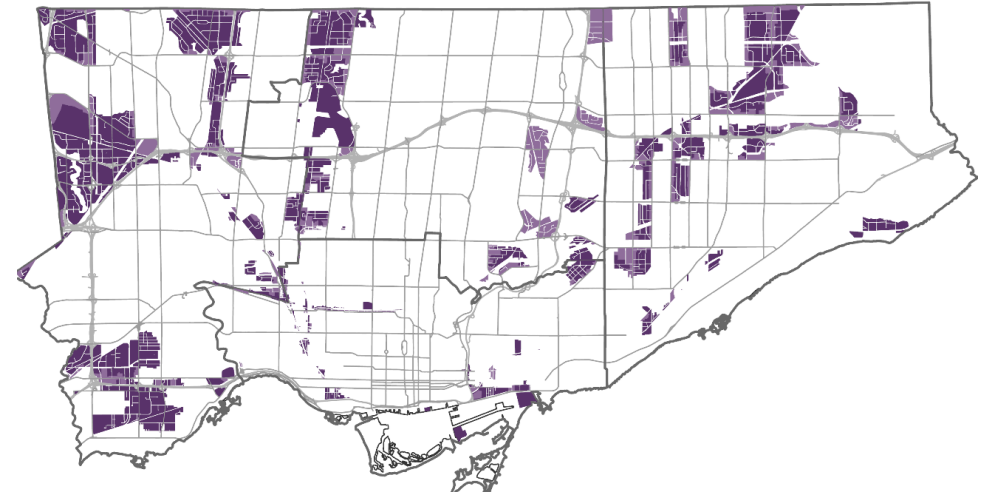
- Align the City's Official Plan with the new provincial definition

## Remove Official Plan Permissions

- Stand-alone offices (*transitioned*)
- Stand-alone retail uses (*transitioned*)
- Fitness centres (*transitioned*)
- Ice Arenas (*moved to Site and Area Specific Policy*)

# Future employment area conversions

- Should OPA 668 (transition) and OPA 680 (alignment) come into effect,
  - Council can consider **site specific applications** to introduce uses that are not permitted, through a managed process
    - Province has signalled the elimination of Municipal Comprehensive Reviews
  - Staff will apply policy “tests” to these site specific applications



## Toronto Employment Areas

- 8,000+ hectares
- 12% of all lands in the City
- 25% (400,000+) of all jobs across the City

# Expanding Uses in Employment Areas

- In July 2022, Council directed staff to consider permitting in Employment Areas
  - places of assembly (bingo halls, banquet halls, others)
  - places of worship
  - sports facilities
- In 2023, staff initiated the study to examine the potential impact of these uses on surrounding employment uses
- Given the Province's passing of Bill 97 and changing the Planning Act definition, staff are recommending concluding this study



# Staff rationale

- By responding to Bill 97 through OPA 668 (transition) and OPA 680 (alignment), the City can:
  - Maintain the integrity and viability of Employment Areas
  - Consider site specific employment area conversions in a managed way
  - Provide businesses with a level of land use certainty
  - Maintain flexibility by transitioning lawfully established uses

## Provincial Guidance to municipalities

“Time-sensitive official plan updates will be needed to align with the new definition...to maintain the integrity of employment areas that are to remain protected over the long-term...”

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# Next steps

1. Council to consider OPA 680 (if adopted, withhold Bills)
2. Province to proclaim Bill 97 definition
3. Council to enact necessary bills
  - OPA 668 (transition)
  - If adopted, OPA 680 (alignment)

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