Attachment 4: Phase 3 Public Survey Summary

Background and Objectives

In December 2024, Council requested that the EHON Neighbourhood Retail and Services Study team conduct additional consultation with the public and residents' associations, supported by a comprehensive communications campaign, to further explain the proposal, gather their opinions and consider potential changes (Item PH17.2).

The EHON Neighbourhood Retail and Services Study Phase 3 survey was created as one piece of that consultation work and communications campaign. It was the third online survey completed as part of the study, following a business survey in 2022 and a residents' survey in 2025.

This survey was intended for both:

• Community members new to the project, and
• Those who shared feedback in 2024.

It provided a refresher on the key ideas, outlined how earlier feedback shaped revisions, and gave respondents a chance to share feedback on the updated proposal. This feedback informed the project team's approach to potential by-law revisions.

Survey Method

The survey was available and active during July to September 2025 on Medallia Agile Research (launched July 14th and closed September 30th), an online surveying platform. To maximize participation and reach, the survey deployment strategy included:

- Multiple promotions on social media Twitter (now called X) and Instagram;
- Promotion at pop-up events, held at a variety of locations across the city, including farmers' markets, Councillor movie nights, libraries, community centres, shopping malls and local businesses, ensuring at least one was held in every ward;
- Promotion at resident association consultation meetings with: CERA (Coalition of Etobicoke Residents Associations), SUN (Scarborough RAs), FONTRA (Federation of North Toronto Residents Associations) and FOSTRA (Federation of South Toronto Residents Associations);
- Promotion at business organization consultation sessions with groups such as: Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA), Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), Canadian Centre for Indigenous Business (CCIB), and Toronto Region Real Estate Board (TRREB);
- Promotion at non-profit community organization meetings; and

- E-mail blast to the EHON notification list.

The survey received total of about 2,600 responses, 1,972 of whom completed the survey to the end. The survey was mostly structured into six sections of questions relating to the draft proposed Zoning By-law Amendment:

Section 1: Current and future access to neighbourhood amenities and services;

Section 2: Major streets (location and use);

Section 3: Neighbourhood interior streets (location and use);

Section 4: Size and Scale; and

Section 5: Home occupations.

Section 6: Other Comments

The survey questions were varied, including multiple-choice where participants could select the best answer(s) and/or rank options based on preference and open-ended questions for written responses. Key findings are summarized below.

Survey Results

1. Current and Future Access to Neighbourhood Retail and Services

Respondents were asked to reflect on existing services near their home and the potential for new services to be established and to elaborate on why certain services are important to them or what makes them easy/difficult to access today.

In response to the question "From your home, what services would you like to have close enough that you can access them by a short walk, roll, cycle or other form of active transportation?", the top five answers were, in order:

1. Groceries and Home Essentials (e.g. Grocery Store, Convenience Store, Pharmacy)
2. Dining (e.g. Coffee Shop, Restaurant or Take-Out)
3. Health Services (e.g. Doctor, Dentist, Massage, Wellness Clinic)
4. Community and Cultural Space
   (e.g. Tutoring, After-School Programs, Gym, Art Gallery, Music Classes)
5. Other Retail Stores (e.g. Clothing, Books, Electronics)

In general comments indicated widespread support for the benefit of a variety of small-scale neighbourhood retail and services, with a particular focus on independent businesses.

Some participants mentioned that neighbourhood services are within walking distance and easily accessible from older neighbourhoods in the core of Toronto such as near Danforth, the Beach or Bedford Park. Some noted that they lived walking distance from a retail plaza and were satisfied with these existing services. Others in these areas noted they must use a car to access neighbourhood services and were seeking new services that they could walk to. Some noted concern about the loss of existing plazas and malls through redevelopment into condominiums where retail space is lacking, vacant or leased by large format chain stores. They requested that City Staff across divisions take actions to protect, enhance and secure new spaces for these businesses.

Some sample responses include:

- “I want to live in a complete community where most stores & services are within walking distance especially as I age but also for the sake of independence, community and employment nearby. If we don’t have to drive so much, we aren’t stuck in traffic. And we’re not isolated in a car but meeting neighbours.”
- “The city needs to be more walkable. I've lived downtown and in Etobicoke and the difference is staggering. I understand I won't have a full grocery store at my nearest corner but by allowing other uses to property besides residential creates a more vibrant community.”
- “In Etobicoke we have everything we need within walking distance unfortunately the city of Toronto is tearing down six points…and will be taking away Cloverdale mall.”
- “I live in North York east of the DVP, just south of Eglinton. I have bikeable access to retail on Lawrence and Eglinton but walking is more of a hike. Would love to see some retail within easier walking distance like a convenience store or cafe. I believe it would make the community more vibrant and encourage more people in the neighbourhood to walk.”
- “Services are fairly distant with the nearest retail plaza a 15 minute walk. The neighbouring area to mine has several apartment towers but not a single retail unit, in spite of the number of people residing there.”
- “Living in Scarborough and not owning a car makes it difficult and time-consuming to access these services because everything is far apart and the roads and neighbourhoods are built for cars.”
- “In Scarborough we need to keep our plaza’s, they work, say NO to rezoning that puts up big condos with retail that stays empty for years.”
- “I do not want any of these in my neighbourhood.”

2. Major Streets

Respondents were asked to share thoughts about focusing a range of new retail, service and office uses on residentially zoned properties on major streets, including if they had any suggested changes to what was currently being proposed.

2a. Location

The proposed zoning changes would allow small-scale retail, service and office uses on the ground floor of residential buildings. Major Streets were chosen as the focus of this range of uses because of the following characteristics they typically exhibit: sidewalks, transit access, walking distance from homes, on-street parking in some areas, bike lanes, bike share and bike parking in some areas.

Respondents were broadly supportive of major streets as the appropriate location for retail, service and office permissions, with 76% expressing support for this proposal. Some respondents expressed discomfort with proposals on interior sites in Section 3 but support for major streets locations in Section 2.

Respondents shared many insightful comments, some of which included:

- "Focusing the new uses on major streets offers a balanced approach because major streets offer existing infrastructure to support new businesses";
- "Focusing the new uses on all kinds of streets, not just major ones";
- "Be bolder; focusing only on major streets doesn't make sense"; "Mixed-use retail is sorely lacking across the city".

2b. Uses

Following the question on location, respondents were asked to tell us about their views on the proposed uses on major streets. The proposed uses include:

- Groceries and Home Essentials (e.g. Grocery Store, Convenience Store, Pharmacy)
- Other Retail Stores (e.g. Clothing, Books, Electronics)
- Dining (e.g. Coffee Shop, Restaurant or Take-Out)
- Health Services (e.g. Doctor, Dentist, Massage, Wellness Clinic)
- Community and Cultural Space (e.g. Tutoring, After-School Programs, Gym, Art Gallery, Music Classes)
- Personal and Pet Services: (e.g. Cleaners, Barber, Pet Grooming)
- Professional Offices (e.g. Lawyer, Accountant, Therapist, Software Developer, Architect)

Generally, many respondents strongly agreed that all these uses and services are welcome on major streets, with some saying "more of everything" and "all great amenities." Some felt the uses and services are welcome on major streets, but only if the infrastructure like garbage storage, delivery, noise, business hours, and signage are monitored and enforced. Respondents also wanted new uses on major streets to provide adequate parking, transit access and bike lanes to ensure disturbances to residents from patrons and businesses are managed. Of those that disagreed with the proposal, there was some commentary about retail uses taking over residential areas when housing is in high demand and unaffordable. As well, there were some comments about keeping residential areas quiet and strictly for living, with some saying “keep residential areas separate.”

3. Neighbourhood Interior

3a. Location

The first question in the Neighbourhood interior section gave an overview of December 2024 proposal to help contextualize the changes made with the revised zoning by-law amendment. From a list of options, respondents were asked to select the most suitable location for retail in the interior of neighbourhoods, with ward-by-ward maps provided for visual purposes (available on study webpage). There was also a follow-up question that asked respondents to tell us more about their thoughts on appropriate retail locations on Interior Streets, and of any suggested changes.

Respondents were given six options to choose from and could only select one option.:

- Retail permitted on any site inside the neighbourhood.
- Retail on all corner sites, as well as next to schools, parks and existing commercial spaces.
- Retail only on corner sites that are on the busier interior streets as well as next to schools, parks and existing commercial spaces.
- Retail only next to schools, parks and existing commercial spaces
- Retail only on corner sites
- Don't permit retail on any site inside the neighbourhood.
- Other (please describe)

The project team analyzed and coded the “Other” responses and consolidated these with the appropriate related selections. The final result was that 72% of respondents supported interior permissions under certain conditions, including 63% who supported the existing permissions or more permissive options, 9% supporting less permissive options and 27% opposed to as-of-right permissions in all cases, with some commentors noting that individual proposals could be approved through Committee of Adjustment on a case-by-case basis.

A breakdown is below:

- 50% of respondents supported options **more permissive** than the current proposal
    - 29.5%: Retail permitted on any site inside the neighbourhood.
    - 19.5% Retail on all corner sites, as well as next to schools, parks and existing commercial spaces.
    - 1%: “Other” comments supporting more permissive options
- 13% supported the **current proposals** (“Retail only on corner sites that are on the busier interior streets as well as next to schools, parks and existing commercial spaces.”)

- 9% supported options **less permissive** than the current proposal
  - 4% Retail only on corner sites
  - 2% Retail only next to schools, parks and existing commercial spaces
  - 3% “Other” comments supporting less permissive options
- 27% **opposed** as-of-right permissions for retail on any site inside the neighbourhood. Some commentors noted that individual proposals could be approved through Committee of Adjustment on a case-by-case basis.
  - 24%: Don't permit retail on any site inside the neighbourhood
  - 3% “Other” comments noting that no retail should be permitted inside the neighbourhood.
- 1% had other comments unrelated to the options above.

For many respondents that agreed with allowing retail location on interior streets, they felt small-scale retail would generate small volumes of traffic and if, cannabis and vape shops are restricted, retail should be allowed in interior of neighbourhoods. Those who disagreed with retail locations on interior streets because they felt the retail uses would be too disruptive to the quiet and peaceful neighbourhoods.

<u>3b. Neighbourhood Interior – Proposed Uses</u>

The second question in the Neighbourhood Interior section was focussed on use and referenced the December 2024 proposal, which included options for retail stores such as indoor seating (3–5 tables), small outdoor patio (2-3 tables) and food service. Under that proposal, cafés would be required to prepare food off-site, while snacks and drinks could be prepared within the store.

Based on this proposal, respondents were asked to select their most preferred retail uses for interior neighbourhood streets from a list of options (see Table 2 for details). A follow-up question invited respondents to share additional thoughts on appropriate uses for these streets and suggest any changes they felt were needed.

Respondents were asked what types of uses they think should be allowed on Interior Streets? Please select all the options you feel are appropriate. The options presented were:

- ☐ Retail Store
- ☐ Take-Out Café in the store
- ☐ Small Sit-Down Café in the store (e.g. up to 4-5 tables)
- ☐ Front or Side Patio (e.g. up to 2-3 tables)
- ☐ Backyard Patio (e.g. up to 2-3 tables)
- ☐ Other Uses (Please describe)

The project team analyzed and coded the “Other” responses and integrated them with the other results. The results are summarized below:

- 66%: Small Sit-Down Café in the store (e.g. up to 4-5 tables)
- 64%: Take-Out Café in the store
- 59%: Retail Store
- 59%: Front or Side Patio (e.g. up to 2-3 tables)
- 51%: Backyard Patio (e.g. up to 2-3 tables)
- 20%: Other: None of the above
- 10%: Other: Additional permissions beyond proposed
  (e.g. full restaurant, other services, no restriction on food preparation).
- 3% Other comments

Commenters supporting the proposals highlighted the benefits of a café as a local gathering space for the community, a place to get their daily needs and a contributor to the vibrancy and quality of life in the neighbourhood. Those who supported a more permissive approach often highlighted the additional amenities to the community while also noting that a more permissive approach would lead to more viable businesses. As in the previous question responses, the 20% who opposed all options generally highlighted the potential for disruption to the neighbourhood, including from traffic, the potential for the sale of Cannabis and Alcohol.

4. Size and Scale

Respondents were asked to share their thoughts on how to define small-scale retail. The proposed zoning by-law changes include rules about the size of permitted retail, service and office spaces to limit them to a neighbourhood scale. These proposed rules are based on such principles as: buildings should be the same size and scale as other buildings in the neighbourhood; a business inside the building can be as small as desired (meaning no minimum size); and a business inside the building should be no larger than the ground floor of a small house or a small local shop.

The majority of respondents agreed with the principles and were not opposed to the proposed definition of small-scale retail. For example, one respondent said, “Small-scale is fine.” Those respondents that disagreed did not support any retail in neighbourhoods irrespective of size.

5. Home Occupations

The question focused on home occupations asked respondents to share their thoughts on the proposed zoning by-law changes that would add some flexibility to rules related to home occupations, which would help more residents start or grow a business from their residence. The proposed zoning changes to home occupations are:

- a business can be located in an ancillary building such as a detached garage or shed, behind or beside a house;
- a business could have up to two employees in the home at any given time, in addition to the residents of the unit;

- for certain uses business owner would be permitted to have clients or customers in their home. These uses include: office (e.g. accountant, designer), education use (e.g. tutoring), artist studio, service shop (e.g. small repairs) or custom workshop) and clarification that a home cannot be used as a warehouse or distribution centre for a shipping and receiving business.

Proposals related to Home Occupations generated fewer comments than other sections and were broadly supported. Many people noted that the proposals were consistent with the increase in home-based businesses in recent years, with some discussing their own home businesses. The benefit of existing prohibitions on vehicular repair, service and washing businesses, as well as the proposed prohibition on warehouses, were also highlighted. Those who did express concerns mainly identified parking and noise as potential issues, with some raising concerns about service shops (which deal with goods other than vehicles) and custom workshops.

Other Comments

Beyond the topics above, respondents had the opportunity to provide additional comments or questions about the proposed changes. Some other items raised included:

- Signage: “I also think signage should be modest and consistent with residential surroundings so that these businesses remain neighbourhood-friendly.”
- Regulation: “Remember when the city tried to tell street vendors how hot dog retailing should be conducted? Stop making rules and allow small businesses to innovate.”
- Safety: “I hope these changes would make livelier neighbourhoods, more 'eyes on the street', and people could do more by walking. One concern is that, on the contrary, some such businesses would bring in clients by car, making parking and traffic worse.”
- Community: “I think businesses on a small street can build community as kids gather to hang out and eat chips and parents meet their neighbours as they buy milk and the paper. I have seen this in urban Ottawa where in one case there was a robbery in a corner store and the neighbourhood came together to support the family that ran the store. There was even a bbq a month or so later to support the family.”
- Potential for Evictions: “Great except I don't think evictions of existing residential tenants should be allowed (as stipulated in the Residential Tenancy Act. Also, I think the expected noise from outdoor cafes and/or restaurants should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion

With 2,600 responses received, and of which nearly 2,000 answered every question, the survey helped city staff gather and analyze feedback on the proposed Zoning By-Law Amendments, which included changes that addressed concerns raised by residents during earlier rounds of consultation. The data and the comments from the survey show that generally there is support for what is being recommended by this report. Furthermore, there is a sense that less stringent measures could be implemented. However, there were a minority number of respondents or consultation attendees who voiced concerns over nuisances or specific uses or sizes. These concerns were taken seriously by the project team, and in balancing them with the expressions of support for the proposal, various revisions to the Zoning By-law Amendments have been made to address them, including limiting retail store locations in neighbourhood interiors and strengthening a monitoring and enforcement strategy of existing and new rules.