



Dear Planning & Housing Committee,

Re: 2025.PH25.3 - Community Within Reach: Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods (EHON) Neighbourhood Retail and Services Study - Phase Three Final Report

The South Etobicoke Community Land Trust supports the City's efforts to legalize neighbourhood retail across Toronto and especially in Wards 2 & 3. We acknowledge that reception of the concept has been fraught, especially across Etobicoke; where the more recently developed suburban parts have never had neighbourhood retail and the amalgamated towns and villages last had this type of retail decades ago. We believe this motion not only aids our land trust's efforts to secure affordable housing, retail and community benefits; but enables pathways to help establish cultural retail and our neighbourhoods continue to be hotbeds for new culture.

As well, small-scale retail provides a sustainable community-serving employment base in a time where South Etobicoke has lost many major employers over the last decade or more. It is conducive to community-led businesses that serve needs which the market does not traditionally find profitable, as well as co-operative and other worker-directed businesses. Furthermore, by removing zoning constraints on where retail can exist, the Planning & Housing Committee can help bolster equity by tackling that supply constraint and reduce the land costs of retail: one constraint that factors into upstart costs for entrepreneurs and new businesses.

Among one example, this motion would help create more affordable grocery stores in neighbourhoods, a much-needed amenity in the wake of many overlapping events: the Loblaw bread price fixing settlement, which ruled in favor of shoppers; heightened public awareness of grocery store monopolism and food deserts; as well as the closure of the Sobeys at 1255 The Queensway and the potential future closures of the Sobeys at 125 The Queensway and the No Frills at 3730 Lake Shore Boulevard West for redevelopment, among other locations. It is apparent the housing crisis, the cost-of-living crisis and the high level of real estate prices is testing the limits of the supermarket-in-suburb model and that the finances of separated retail land uses are buckling. All the while, Torontonians need ever-harder to find affordable food.

We applaud staff for [selecting a diverse range of residential streets in Ward 2](#) as Community Streets. Though we would rather that the framework from 2024.PH12.4 (all residential streets legalized for neighbourhood retail) be implemented, we believe this set will be a good springboard for making people familiar with street-level retail integrated into housing. We are glad to see residential streets selected in Ward 3 as well, especially in Alderwood and New Toronto as well as in the east of the ward, where there is a high concentration of residential use with little adjacent walkable retail.

However, we are concerned many Community Streets in Ward 3 selected between Kipling and Islington; north of The Queensway and south of the CPR rail line; as well as choices like Drummond St. and The East Mall Crescent are not located in residential zoning, but almost entirely in Employment Lands or Commercial-Residential designated areas, which already have retail permissions or could easily obtain zoning variances for them through existing processes. These do not grant immediate access to retail in residential neighbourhoods nor create many areas where these permissions would be new or restored. Notably, the current map would not re-legalize the site of a former retail store in Long Branch south of Lake Shore as neighbourhood retail (the selected streets there are all north of Lake Shore); there are a few other residential pockets without access to retail that the map leaves wanting.



Pictured: The aforementioned former retail store, located along Fortieth St

Additionally, we believe as-of right permissions for patios in Neighbourhood Interiors should remain, as they serve both to animate streetscapes and to create more third spaces for people, closer to their homes and not requiring a drive. Many of the concerns voiced about noise or garbage are ones that are already regulated by existing by-laws and patrons are most likely to be from the surrounding community.

To that point, small-scale businesses would bring communities closer together: business owners have incentive to build good relationships with their neighbours and their neighbourhood; artists gain places that function as their own workshops and studios as well as places to perform; community gardens and other grassroots initiatives would be able to integrate their work into local businesses.

We hope this motion passes as presented and that any amendments made serve to expand the possible places where small-scale retail can be had. Integration with the Night Economy and Cultural Districts initiatives would be welcome so that existing BIPOC-, woman-, 2SLGBTQ+- and disabled-owned businesses can be preserved, but new ones can open, in or out of established diaspora and cultural communities, and offer locally relevant goods and services.

Sincerely,
Thaddeus W. Sherlock and Tanya Vividly
Board of Directors, South Etobicoke Community Land Trust