



Employment Lands and the Future of Work - Policy Focused Public Meeting Summary

Date & Time: June 21, 2022, 5:00 - 7:00pm

Total Registrants: 143

Total Participants: 67

Location: WebEx Virtual Event

Project Team Attendees:

City of Toronto – Jeff Cantos, Kyle Fearon, Christina Heydorn, Phillip Parker, Pauline Beaupre, Rebecca Condon, David Fitzpatrick, Jason Tsang
Dillon Consulting – Kristin Lillyman, Ying Ye, Ish Chowdhury

Dillon Consulting, the independent facilitation team retained by the City of Toronto, facilitated the meeting and prepared this summary. Participants were encouraged to provide additional feedback to the project team through continued conversations and outreach with the Dillon and City team. This summary is intended to reflect the key discussion points from the meeting and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript.

1.0 Meeting Overview

On June 21, 2022, the City of Toronto Official Plan (OP) Team and Dillon Consulting Engagement Team hosted a policy focused meeting on employment lands and the future of work. This virtual meeting provided an overview the Official Plan, insights to Toronto’s Economy, and an overview of the draft Employment Policies and Employment Area Conversions. It also included opportunities for feedback and input from the public, then outlined next steps and upcoming opportunities to engage. The format included a presentation, Q&A, polling questions, and the active use of the chat function to guide discussions.

This was the first of three policy focused public meetings to dig deeper on a specific subject matter. The meeting focused on the following items:

1. Official Plan Refresher
2. Toronto’s Economy
3. Employment Policies
4. Conversion Requests
5. Wrap-up and Next Steps

A copy of the presentation is included on the Our Plan website.

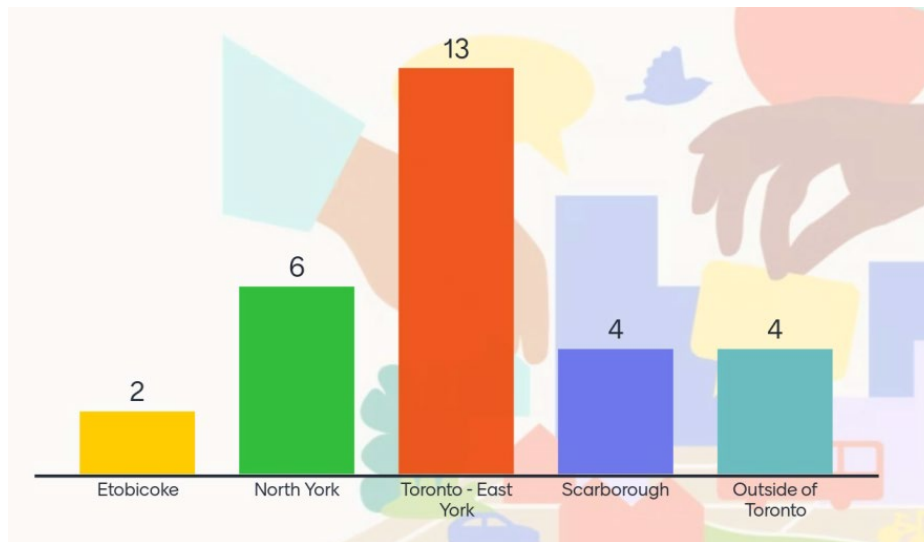


2.0 Polling Questions

As part of the open house, questions were prepared and provided to participants in the form of a poll through Mentimeter. Participants were able to log in through their phones, tablets and computers to engage through either the link or a QR Code. This provided an interactive means to engage participants in real-time and allowed others to gain insight to the data.

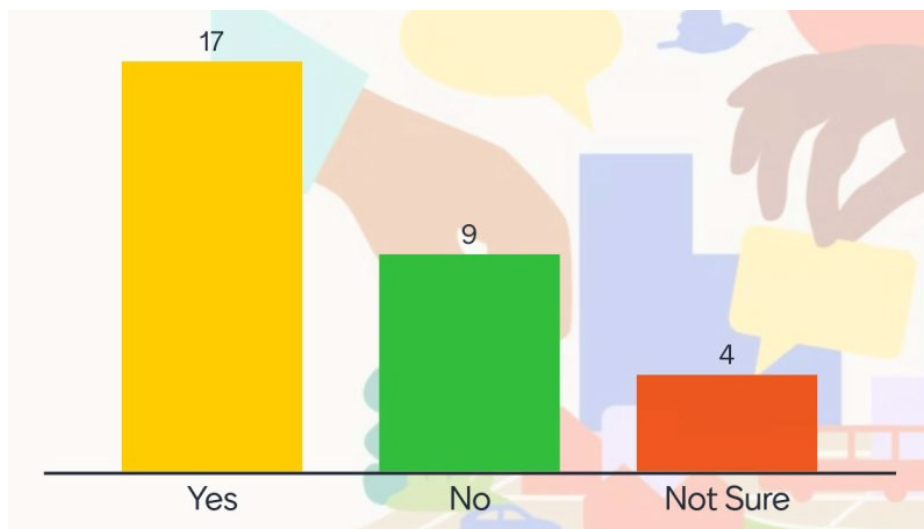
1. Where are you participating from?

29 participants contributed with 45% from Toronto – East York, 21% from North York, 14% each from Scarborough and Outside of Toronto, and 7% from Etobicoke.



2. Have you participated in other Our Plan Toronto engagement activities?

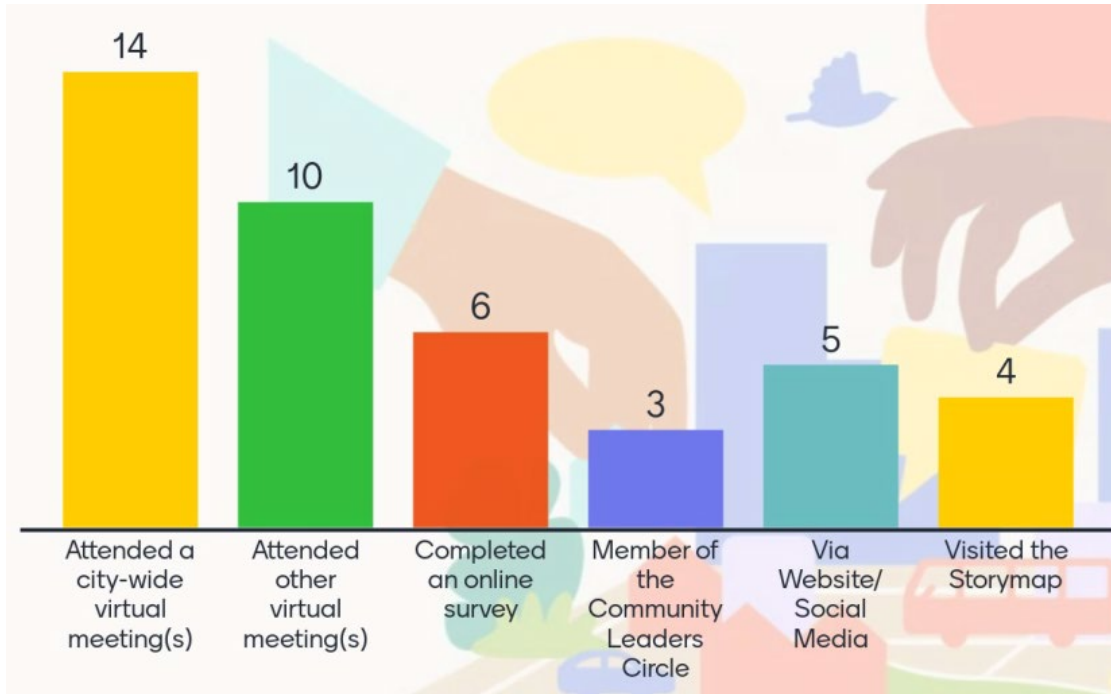
30 participants contributed with 56% having attended previously, 30% being their first time, and 13% not sure.





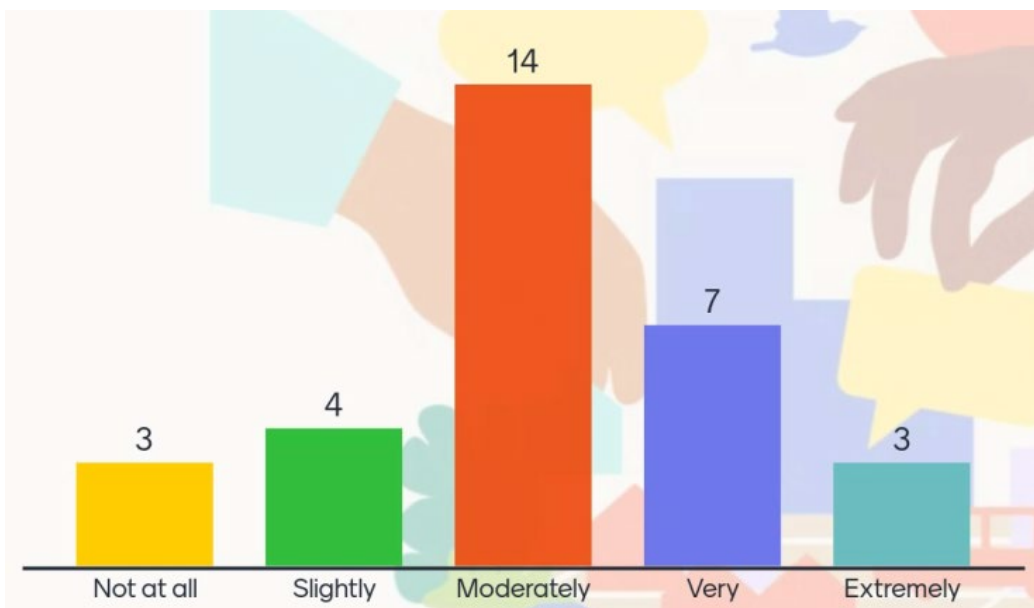
3. How did you previously participate?

23 participants contributed with 61% attended a city-wide virtual meeting(s), 43% attended other virtual meeting(s), 26% completed an online survey, 22% via website/social media, 17% visited the Storymap and 13% were members of the Community Leaders Circle.



4. How familiar are you with the Toronto Official Plan?

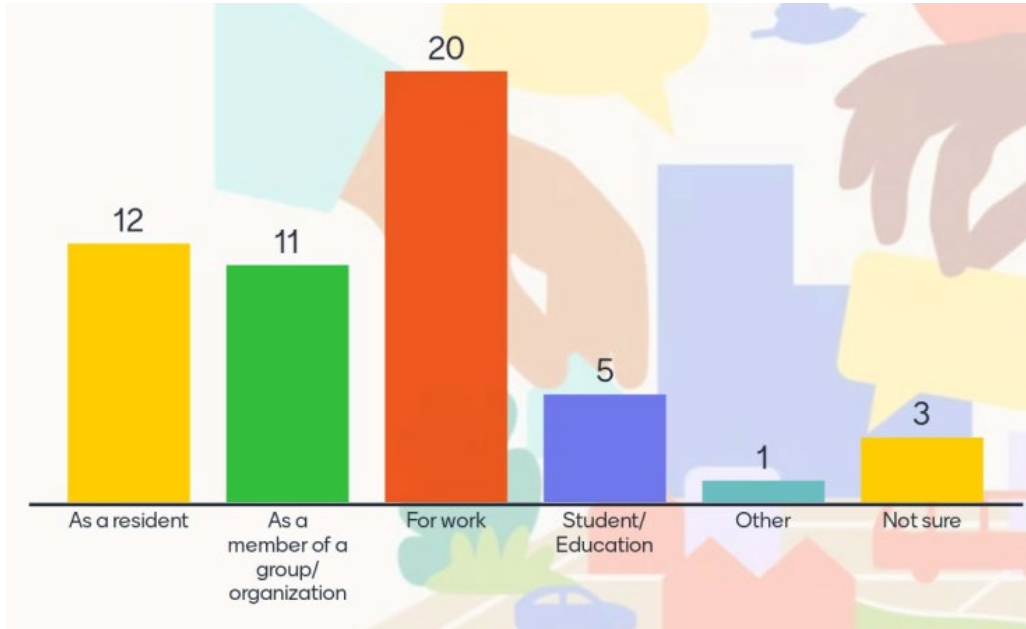
31 participants contributed with 44% being moderate, 23% being very, 13% being slightly, and 10% each being not at all familiar and extremely familiar.





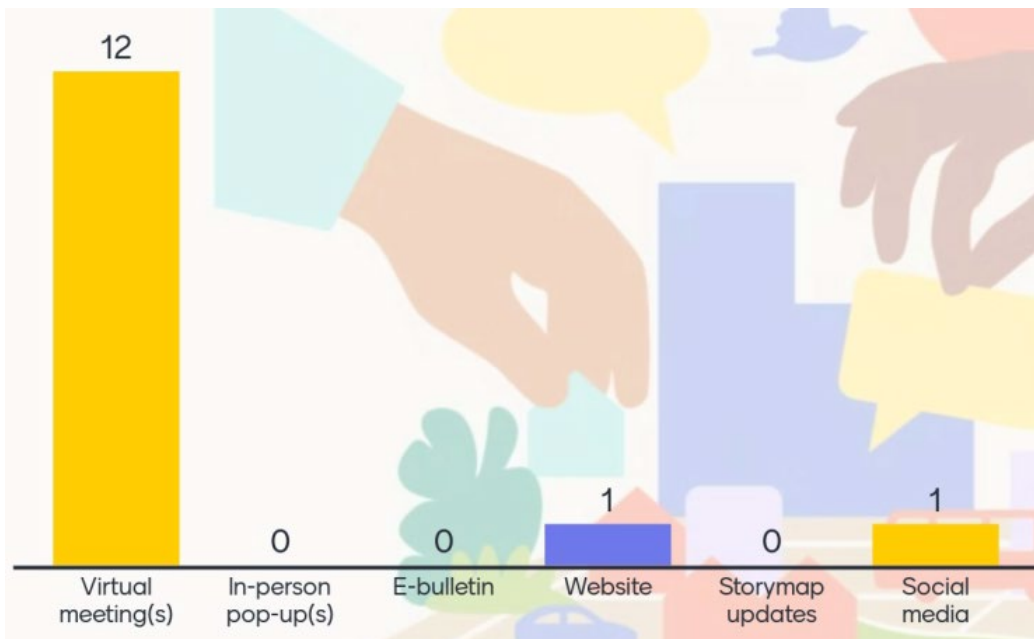
5. How do you currently use the Toronto Official Plan?

30 participants contributed with 67% for work, 40% as a resident, 37% as a member of a group/organization, 17% as student/education, 10% as not sure and 3% as other.



6. How would you like to continue to stay involved with Our Plan Toronto?

14 participants contributed with 86% through virtual meeting(s) and 7% each to website and social media.





3.0 Summary of Facilitated Q&A Discussion

Throughout the presentation and between each section, attendees were provided the opportunity to ask questions. Contributions were provided by participants through a mix of verbal and written questions and commentary pertaining to issues and ideas discussed. This summary is intended to reflect the key discussion points and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript. Participant questions and comments appear in bold text followed by responses shared by the project team when responses were provided.

Summary of discussion on the Official Plan refresher:

Will the presentation be posted online?

- Yes – the slide decks will be posted online on the Our Plan Toronto website. We will add closed captioning and alternative text prior to posting.

I would like to see asphalt plants included in that list of employment.

- Can change it to concrete and asphalt batching; they are different but similar essential goods. Having a shelf life, the batching would need to be close by to where it is being used.

Has a Land Needs Assessment been undertaken/ finalized for the Official Plan Review and has it considered the amount of employment lands required?

- Yes - the Land Needs Assessment report will be going to Planning and Housing Committee on July 5th. The report will be made public approximately a week before the meeting.

How will you protect the food terminal? This is a necessary location and is still worth keeping in place.

- When the Province first identified Provincially Significant Employment Zones, the food terminal was not included. Through City staff's recommendation, City Council included it as a provincially significant employment zone. The City planning team and economic development team are working to carefully consider conversion requests, knowing that the food terminal has huge economic spin-offs.

When outlining the OP, seems like a very high level Policy document. How does this translate to more jobs? Having a thriving economic health in the city?

- The Official Plan can provide a level of land use certainty for operation of businesses. This way, land use conflict can be minimized between sensitive uses such as daycares and residences near industries; it can provide certainty through things like creating distance between incompatible uses. The Official Plan also has a number of tests that the



City planning team and economic development team use when considering land conversion requests.

How changeable is the future plan? How often are these reviews?

- The Official Plan is a document that provides the vision for what the City will look like 30 years from now and because of this we use flexible language. We review it often, with the Province requiring a review every 5 years; and every 10 years if it's brand new document.

How are we planning for complete communities around transit stations when there is an example of our transit station which has 3000 residential units with no other balance variable for jobs, etc.?

- Many of our Major Transit Station Areas include both residential and employment uses. They're generally not master planned but do allow for a flexible mix of uses.

Summary of discussion on Toronto's Economy:

Why are we losing these kinds of employment areas where small and mid-sized businesses are located?

- Across the city we are seeing growth in demand and vacancy levels tightening up. This, as a result, is creating opportunities but also challenges for businesses as well. When there are greater demands, the bigger users are able to pay increased rent, afford more space and as a result force out smaller users. Policy in this regard can help level the playing field; by restricting certain types of uses in employment areas, we're able to maintain some affordability. This supports new spaces opening and helps existing businesses plan to reinvest.

What would construction fall under, in terms of an activity code?

- On site construction would be captured under the Manufacturing sector and the head office / office jobs would be captured separately in the Office sector.

What is meant by a flexible mix of uses? Is that both single and multi-family residential duplexes, townhouses, office, retail?

- It depends on the Official Plan designation and zoning for the specific area. Major transit station area policies don't give specific permissions but rather defer to the existing land use policies and zoning.

How does that work with meeting the provincially mandated minimum densities in these MTSAs?

- We're required to plan for the minimum density targets set out by the Province. We've analyzed how much density each station area can achieve based on the existing



population and employment, Official Plan and zoning permissions, and development applications submitted to the City. Most transit stations can achieve these targets with these elements.

With employment lands bordering residential, there has been push back from residents regarding increased traffic safety issues. Is there a waiver form that any new owner or previous owner would have to fill in to accommodate the employment lands next to their residence?

- In preparing policy, Chapter 2 of the Official Plan has something called the Compatibility Mitigation Study. This study comes from someone being interested in adding or creating new or intensifying sensitive uses, like residential uses, that are near employment areas. This study requires an engineer or a specialist, who would look at a number of factors such as noise and odour, and put together a document that would speak to how a new residential development could impact the operations of an existing industry. Similarly, it also looks to how the industry would impact residents. The outcome of the study could result in a notice that any person who purchases a residential unit in the future is made aware of factors such as noise and odor.

How are our employment areas connected to transit?

- Looking at the data, there is a very high degree of transit use for people that work in employment areas and live elsewhere. When looking at higher order transit, infrastructure developments such as the Ontario line, subway extensions, and GO stations can impact and improve access to employment areas. These investments also increases land value and the types of employment uses within proximity to these areas. The City, through the MTSA work, has been able to identify appropriate areas to encourage intensification of employment uses. Employment Areas are aligned with business and economic use, and with jobs spread across the City, in our centers and major arterials, higher order transit makes access for employees accessible.

The Province has mandated that new transit must have significant residential development. Where this impacts Employment Areas, such as South of Eastern, it eliminates the protected employment areas; the jobs remaining appear to be office only. How is this protecting crucial employment lands for industries that require no proximity to residential?

- South of Eastern is one example of a new transit investment program where the Province has established that and is relying on the development industry to supply stations as opposed to the taxpayer. In order to do this, development is retaining employment space but also adding residential. With south of Eastern, the employment space was intended for office, retail, and creative industries.
- With south of Eastern, the City is mindful of the film industry and its impact to the City's economy. Due to this, the City is careful in considering employment area conversion requests and the potential impact on operating film studios. Employment areas in turn need to be protected, as they provide a critical role to the City; it can't just be what makes



the most dollars but what provides a critical role to the City's economy and regional economy.

Summary of discussion on Employment Policies:

The Hemson Report recommended protecting employment areas for the long term, and prohibition of residential uses there. Are the conversion requests viewed through this lens? In light of Hemson Report, why would residential conversion be considered?

- Over time, context and needs change as well as the interests of residents and businesses. The conversion could prove to make the best use of the investment that balances many City interests.
- Worth mentioning is all the policies of the parent plan would still apply. So, if there was a conversion, the landowner would still need to demonstrate that the uses are compatible with the surrounding employment areas and that the uses that are planned will continue to be viable. Conversion is an opportunity to balance interests and achieve many city building objectives.
- As part of provincial requirements, we have to review these requests as part of the Municipal Comprehensive Review process and there may be situations in which case a conversion to permit residential uses may be appropriate to achieve important city-building objectives.

Is there an appeal process through the Province for denied conversion request?

- The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approval authority for the Official Plan Amendment that the conversions are part of. The decision of the Minister is not appealable. Recent amendments to the Planning Act give the Minister the option to put forward all or part of an amendment to the OLT (Ontario Lands Tribunal) for either a recommendation back to the Minister or to the OLT to make a decision.

Are the 20 or so conversion requests being presented at the July 5th meeting ones that have already been recommended to be converted in the preliminary assessment? And then the remaining over 100 being reviewed up until the early 2023?

- These are ones (going to July 5th) where the City felt that they could take to Council and make a recommendation and the others will just need a bit more time to work through. During the Council break, there are no meetings to bring conversion request to. The City will bring forward the remaining conversion requests once Council resumes in early 2023.

Regarding regeneration areas, how does that differ from the 100 requests you are not going to decide on until next year, since both are getting further study?

- The requests that are going in in early 2023 are still being reviewed and a final assessment is not yet complete. However, a regeneration area designation triggers a



study which includes a number of criteria/elements that need to be completed, part of that regeneration study will be the determination of the appropriate land use.

In the past when there is a development application or an application to convert employment lands, there was a push to build residential around transit hubs even if it means putting sensitive uses where they are in direct conflict with heavy industry for example. Has this stance changed when looking at applications especially in proximity to provincially significant employment lands?

- Staff have to ensure that recommendations are in conformity with the Provincial Growth Plan and consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. Ultimately it comes down to good planning, and there has definitely been an evolution in planning policy and thought in the province since the last MCR, when conversion requests were last considered.

When an employment land lot straddles one or more municipal lines, is a conversion more difficult because there are more stakeholders or jurisdictions?

- It does add a layer of complexity, and one of the policy questions we have to answer is whether a conversion request has any jurisdictional issues, so it's something the City always considers.

I've heard that small and micro businesses are tremendous creators of employment. Would it be of interest to all Torontonians to encourage local small businesses, which so many new Canadians are known for - in contradiction to the large international operators that make the news and how would that fit into the Employment Lands concept?

- A lot (but not all) businesses operating in Employment Areas are small. The average manufacturing business for example has 28 employees. It's a good point and something that is often discussed, particularly through COVID. One policy change we can point to is the small business tax subclass, [City of Toronto Website, Small Business Tax Subclass](#)

Businesses require certainty, a 5 year review cycle is too tight for a business investment.

- The 5 year requirement is provincial legislation.

Where can public comment and review conversion requests? Also, during your review of the request can you ask/receive additional information from the applicant?

- The full list of conversion requests is located on the OP website, under the "considering requests" heading.
- [City of Toronto Website, Official Plan Review](#) and you can provide comments directly to the opreview@toronto.ca email

Summary of discussion on Conversion Requests:



When you say conversion request, does that mean heavy industry to light or manufacturing uses?

- It can be from core employment to general employment - which could include moving from heavier to lighter types of employment but a conversion request could also be to another land use that would permit residential uses (e.g. mixed use).

For the ~120 conversion requests that are not part of amendment 591 (being presented early 2023) - what is the follow up process? Will there be further public and applicant stakeholder engagement?

- The next round of conversion requests are going to follow the same process as what's being reported this July. So, they will undertake the same due diligence, including site visits and any other material the City needs to undertake its review.

Queen Street and Carlaw Avenue has some businesses that cannot be near sensitive uses, would you be expropriating them?

- With Queen Street and Carlaw Avenue, there are different contexts, where the area has diverse uses. On the east side, there are residential condominiums while the west has context that warrants an employment designation. The City will take a boots on the ground approach to see what's around today to better reflect the policies into the future.

Will this OPA address how the City will bring a large part of industrially zoned lands into the City-wide Zoning By-law (569-2013)? E.g. IC zones in Toronto and MC zones in North York and Scarborough.

- That is a different exercise, and this Official Plan Amendment does not modify or propose changes to zoning. That zoning exercise is continuing and this Official Plan Amendment does not address it.
- For more information on conformity for Official Plan Employment Areas: Phase 2 Work Plan - [City of Toronto Website, Planning and Housing Committee April 27, 2022](#)

Summary of questions/comments from the chat:

- Can the City work with transit areas to use a master plan approach with the complete community approach to increase employment areas within the transit stations? An analogy would be Don Mills and Meadowvale as an example but adapted to transit stations.
- I think a good example of how acknowledgements are ineffective would be the developments that sprung up around the Redpath location downtown. Residents were required to sign on title and they still received multiple complaints the first week the buildings were occupied.
- Live work spaces are certainly on the increase and could be located in transit stations sites if using the complete village approach, and other general employments spaces



- Will the final assessments be grouped in the same way as the preliminary assessments, with a 4 group approach? If so - what are the dates for each of those assessments beyond July 5?
- Can you give an example of a conversion (e.g., Geary Avenue - what was the original land use and what was the request for conversion and the result?)
- A gentle reminder that Pearson airport was conceived as a 24 hour airport. As the land around the airport was rezoned for residential (more tax dollars), the residents began to lobby against the number of flights and the time of day for the flights... our international competitiveness has been hampered ever since.
- Yes, also around the food terminal applications for high rise is being processed and this is very concerning. It's like driving on the expressway and looking into residential units when congestion is in process.
- Has there been any study of long existing (older) employment lands mixed in with residential housing (Hwy 400 Area - South Portion). It seems the mix is at a standstill and nothing has changed. There are people/children riding their bikes on the sidewalk while big trucks are navigating thru tight residential streets. There are seniors walking down to transit having to be careful with turning trucks. Just curious if there is any thought to the safety in this neighbourhood.
- Micro business yes is I think prime candidate for transit stations along with other general new age tech oriented focus.
- How does a layperson relate to this on a sq. ft. building base or some way to relate instead of 50 jobs per hectare or whatever?
- Some businesses in South of Eastern have anywhere from 300 - 500 employees.
- Yes, a lot of live and work places good example of mix use or complete approach could be better.

4.0 Meeting Close

Following the presentation and discussions, the City and Dillon project team provided the participants with the next steps in the process. Participants were also encouraged to reach out to Dillon or the City if there were ideas to share following the meeting.