

## **Industrial lands are for film employment district: councillors**

### **Community council opposes bid for big box retail plan**

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**Industrial lands south of Eastern Avenue in Leslieville shouldn't be home to big box retail or housing, but should continue to be preserved as a film and media employment district close to the city's core, the Toronto and East York Community Council has recommended.**

**Community council voted Tuesday to recommend a secondary plan for the area including lands currently occupied by the Toronto Film Studio. The vote, which must still be approved by Toronto Council, comes as SmartCentre proceeds with an Ontario Municipal Board appeal to redevelop those lands into a 700,000-square-foot retail complex. The secondary plan is in part a response to that appeal - and deliberately sets out a vision for the lands between Woodfield Avenue and the Don Valley Parkway and Eastern Avenue and Lakeshore Boulevard that includes minimal retail to service the green, media-related industry that ought to, according to the plan, continue to dominate the district.**

**Community council heard from a range of community representatives - many of whom supported the secondary plan for the area, worrying about the effect that other alternative - the massing of big box retail - would have on the community.**

**"After a century of industrial toxic use we think this community deserves better," said Kelly Carmichael, a spokesperson for the East Toronto Community Coalition.**

**Carmichael brought a questionnaire that the coalition has been circulating, indicating a dramatic level of opposition to the big box complex, which could include a Wal-Mart.**

**The committee also heard from deputants who pointed out that a Walmart would provide jobs to more vulnerable residents in the area, as well as inexpensive shopping in an area that is otherwise showing all the signs of gentrification.**

**But the community council went with the plan that limited any retail to small, 200-square-foot shops that would only be there to service the employment district. Local Ward 30 (Toronto Danforth) Councillor Paula Fletcher put forward a motion to look for other sites - possibly south of Lakeshore Boulevard - where that type of development might take place.**

**"This is not about who would be moving into an area - this is a question of what the land is designated for, what is it used for?" said Fletcher. "Having heard those concerns, that's why I'm moving that we start identifying areas in the region that might be suitable to zone for retail."**

**Ward 32 (Beaches-East York) Councillor Sandra Bussin, however, made it clear that the Smartcentre development with that sort of retail would amount to a serious threat to businesses in her community - notably the Gerrard India Bazaar. And she said the city needs to retain the industrial uses along Eastern.**

**"Eastern isn't the prettiest street in the world but there needs to be an understanding that this is the last location in the city core for industrial uses," she said.**