

LAND AND JOBS

Nearly twenty years ago Labour Council sponsored a major conference entitled *Manufacturing Matters*. As well as outlining the need for a strong manufacturing base in Toronto and the economic benefits involved, the proceedings also focused on the importance of maintaining industrial lands. At that time there was tremendous pressure by speculative interests to re-zone these lands for commercial or residential uses, and the labour movement wisely pointed out the danger in doing so.

The relationship between good jobs and land use continues to be of vital interest to working families in Toronto. Today, people are mobilizing around three very different land use struggles, each of which ties back to the quality of jobs and the quality of life in our neighbourhoods.

In north Etobicoke, UNITE HERE has spearheaded a broad based coalition that has come together to demand a community benefits agreement from the Woodbine Entertainment Group. The Community Organizing for Responsible Development (CORD) has done extensive mobilization of youth, seniors, union members, community groups and local activists to forge an alliance around a set of key demands for good jobs, local hiring, and community services. CORD turned out a remarkable 500+ residents to support these goals.

In the Black Creek-Eglinton area, the demolition of the Kodak factory has left 57 acres of industrial land up for grabs. Residents want to see this land re-developed for meaningful employment instead of carved up into big box stores and tract housing. The former stockyards of Keele/St. Clair are the example of what not to do as few of the jobs left from that conversion pay much above poverty wages.

In South Riverdale/Eastern Avenue, the Toronto Film Studio lands have been taken over by a consortium that includes Smart Centres, the landowner of choice for Wal-Mart and other power centre box stores. Over two hundred residents showed up at a local meeting to say no to the Walmartization of this east end neighbourhood. At risk are not only ancillary film industry locations, but also local businesses and the unionized Loblaws superstore.

The City's Economic Development Committee is looking at policies that protect employment lands, and have highlighted areas such as Kodak or the Dufferin-Keele corridor once the subway line is extended north. Labour Council supports these policies in principle, but the labour movement needs to engage in this vital issue in a co-ordinated way. Our struggle to defend manufacturing and film industry jobs, and the fight to raise the standards of low-wage workers, are all linked to the kind of development that will take place on employment lands.

The Executive Board recommends that:

1. Labour Council work with affiliates, the City, community activists, and local manufacturers to establish clear policies defending the integrity of employment areas in Toronto.
2. Labour Council advocate for linking issues of good jobs and environmental sustainability with urban planning decisions being made by Toronto and other municipal governments in our jurisdiction.
3. Labour Council work with community and environmental activists to develop a comprehensive policy around the various planning tools that could be utilized under the new powers found within the City of Toronto Act.