



Background Report

(Work in Progress)

Richmond Hill Downtown Area Design & Land Use Strategy

June 2008

This Background Report compiles the work in progress on the Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy. It is intended to prepare the team for the Downtown Forum and will be augmented during the subsequent phases of the study.

Please note: This document is intended to be printed double-sided and in colour.

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

With the initiation of the new **Strategic Plan** and **Official Plan**, Richmond Hill is on the cusp of an exciting era of Town planning, managing and guiding for future growth and development. Socio-economic shifts, recent Provincial planning initiatives, diminished availability of developable lands, and the sustainability imperative have all presented tremendous opportunity and possibility in the Town's evolution. As is evident in similar contexts across North America, possibly no other place in Richmond Hill is better positioned to benefit from this shift as the Downtown.

The inherent characteristics that define downtowns are consistent with the renewed attention being paid to creating **walkable, transit-oriented, compact** and **mixed-use communities** that are civic-minded in their design. Moreover, many downtowns have experienced a renaissance fuelled by market shifts towards alternative housing choices, urbane life styles, and the authenticity of the 'main street'. With growing interest in developing in such contexts, a great opportunity exists for Richmond Hill to harness this change in a manner that will reinforce the treasured qualities downtown. Essential to this end is a clearly articulated **long-term vision** and **comprehensive guidance** for the evolution of Downtown, which the Town of Richmond Hill has recognized to be a priority.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The key purpose of this undertaking is to provide:

- A comprehensive vision for the future Downtown to inform and be consistent with the Town's new Strategic Plan and New Official Plan;
- Strategies for land use, circulation, heritage, and the design quality and character of the public realm and built form; and,
- Recommendations for the necessary studies, plans, policies, incentives and programs to implement the long-term vision.

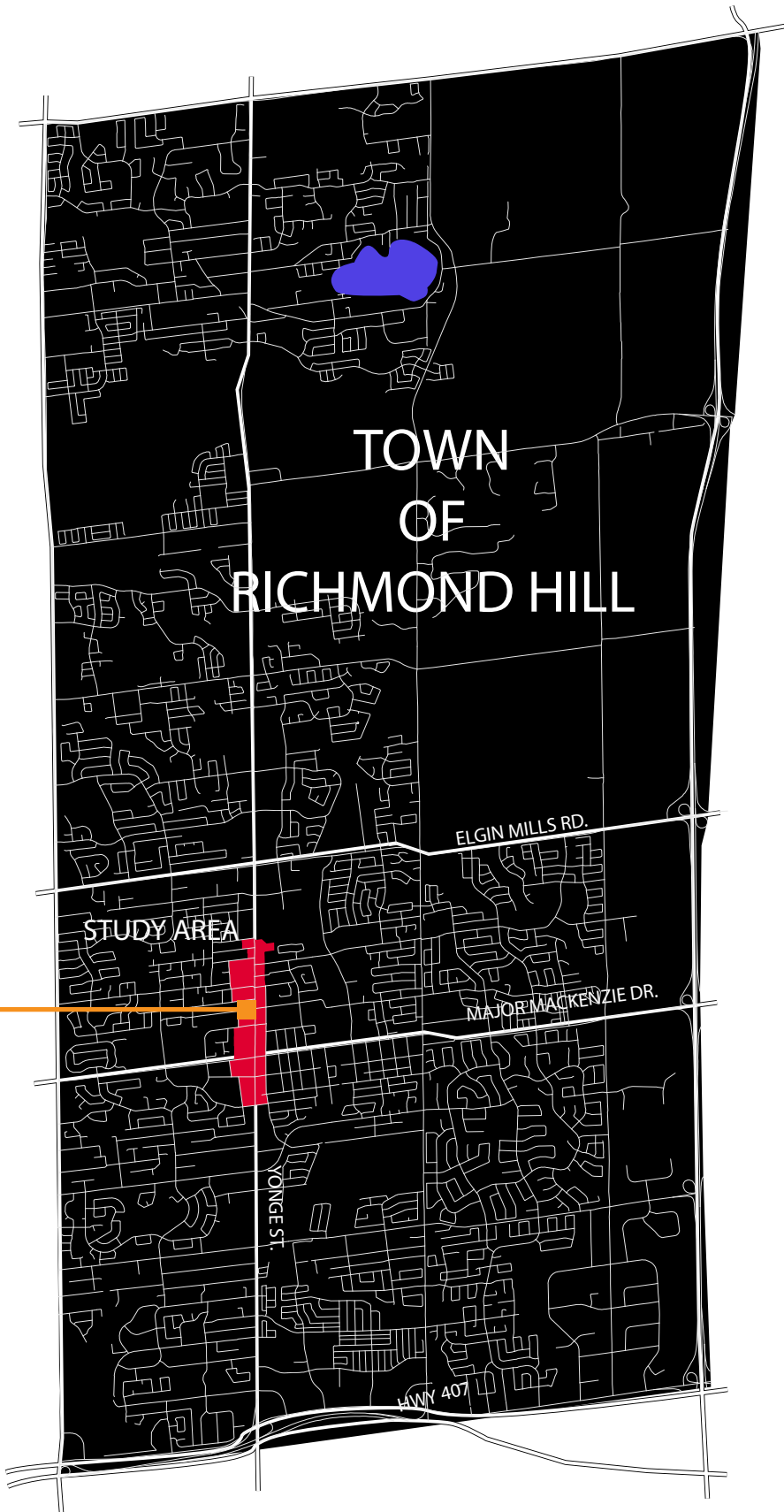
The vision and strategy will, among other things, consider:

- Aspects of the Downtown to protect and enhance;
- Opportunities for land use, development and intensification that are appropriate and mindful of heritage and established neighbourhoods; and,
- Opportunities for the expansion and improvement of the public realm, including streets and open spaces.

1.2 Study Area

The study area is located within the Town of Richmond Hill in the Regional Municipality of York. The Town of Richmond Hill is generally defined by Highway 7 in the south, Highway 404 in the east, Bloomington Road in the north, and Bathurst Street in the west. It is approximately 100 km² with a population of approximately 162,700.

Downtown Richmond Hill, also referred to as the Village Core, is generally situated within the geographic centre of the Town's urbanized area. The boundaries for this study include the commercial, mixed-use, institutional, and open space properties on both sides of Yonge Street from Harding Boulevard in the south, to Leventdale Road in the north and includes approximately 2 km of Yonge Street.



Downtown within the Town of Richmond Hill



Richmond Hill within the Greater Golden Horseshoe

1.3 The Evolution of Downtown

The Downtown represents the historic heart of the present-day Town of Richmond Hill. Settlement began in the late 1700's and early 1800's around the intersection of Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive. Gradually, the large farm lots that flanked Yonge Street were divided into smaller parcels to accommodate stores, workshops, churches, schools, and homes for the emerging village. New roads were built into the interior of the farm lots on both the east and west sides of Yonge Street to create opportunities for residential development, while the former large acreages were further divided into smaller parcels in the context of a typical rural Ontario village of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The neighbourhoods of the Downtown have been in a constant state of evolution for a period of almost 200 years. The result is an established district with an eclectic mix of commercial, institutional, and housing ages, styles, sizes, and materials on lots of varying frontages and areas.

The existing commercial character on Yonge Street includes three distinct segments:

- **Southern Segment**

The southern segment is located north of Harding Boulevard and south of Major Mackenzie Drive and includes existing institutional, personal service, and service commercial uses. A large amount of vacant land exists within this segment, part of which is owned by the Town of Richmond Hill.

- **Central Segment**

The Central Segment is located north of Major Mackenzie Drive and south of Dunlop Street and includes general commercial, institutional, and emerging cultural-institutional uses. The Town of Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts is under construction. A new mixed use development by Tridel is also under construction in this segment. The area is also characterized by churches, heritage buildings, and mature trees. The Yonge Street right-of-way in the Central Segment is narrower than the right-of-way in the Southern and Northern Segments.

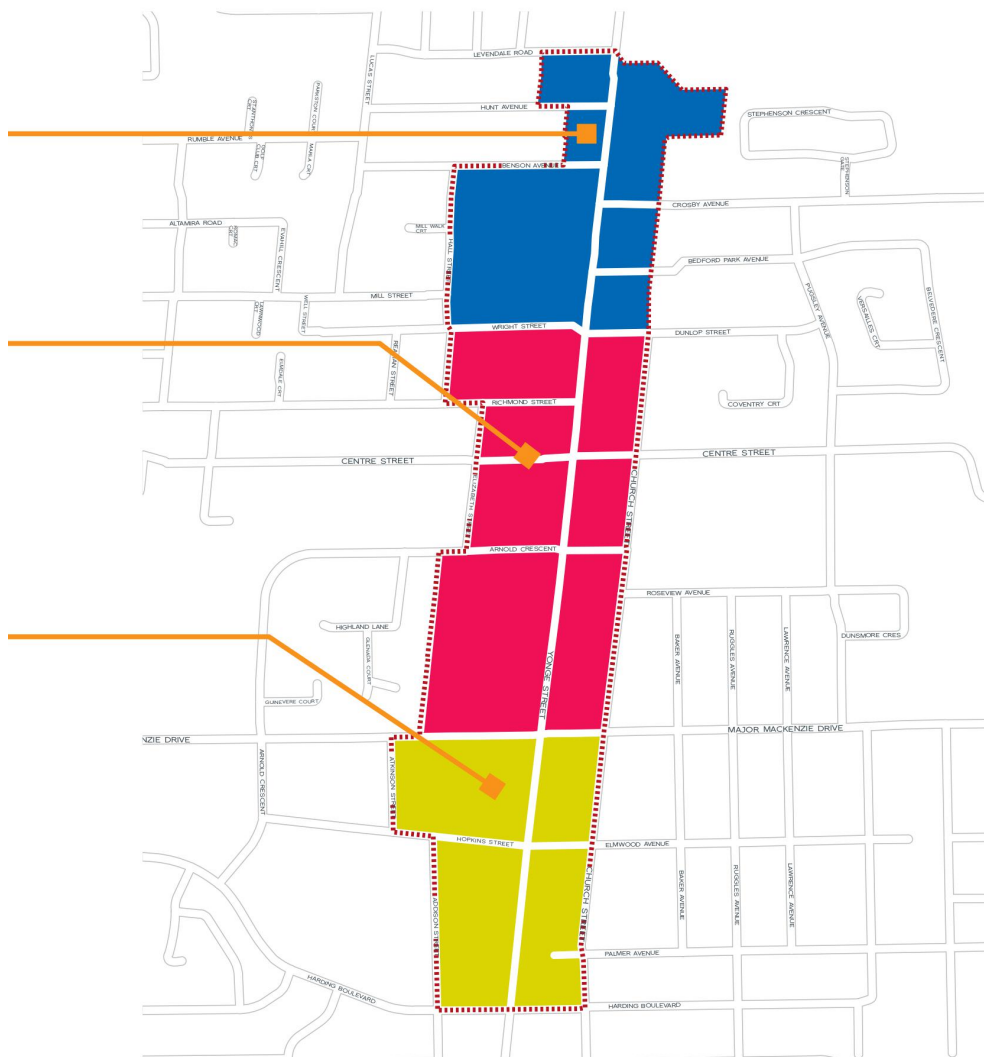
- **Northern Segment**

The Northern Segment is located north of Dunlop Street to Leventdale Road and includes a mix of retail, supermarket, automobile related, and highway commercial uses. The built form within this segment is characterized by automobile oriented uses and highway commercial signage.

The character of each of these segments is unique, defined not only by the building form, but also by the varying Yonge Street right-of-way width. Recently, the Town has taken steps to establish identifiable community focal points for residents and businesses (i.e. the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, the McConaghy Seniors Centre, the Richmond Hill Public Library, upgraded streetscape elements, façade and signage improvement programs, the revitalization of the Tornat Block, the revitalization of the

Lorne Block, and the Tridel mixed retail-residential development) within the Downtown. In addition, over the past two terms of Council, the Town has established the Downtown Task Force and hired a Downtown Facilitator to advise on development of a vision for a revitalized downtown. This study will provide a comprehensive vision for the future direction of the Downtown Area, which has yet to be articulated within the Town's existing planning and design policies.


While there have been many previous studies undertaken for Downtown Richmond Hill, such as the Village Core Revitalization Strategy (1998) and the Village Core Design Guidelines (1992), no study has looked as comprehensively at the Downtown. This study not only includes a larger area than previous plans, but also includes strategies related to land use planning and the types of uses that should be encouraged to ensure a vibrant and successful downtown for Richmond Hill.



1.4 Team

The consultant team is comprised of **The Planning Partnership** working in association with strategic advisors, **E.R.A Architects Inc.** (Heritage) and **Poulos & Chung** (Transportation and Parking).

The consultant team is working in close collaboration with a staff team. The Staff Team assigned to lead the Downtown Strategy is comprised of Staff from the Policy Section and the Urban Design Section of the Planning Division in the Planning and Development Department, and the Office of Strategic Initiatives in the Office of the Chief Administrative Office .



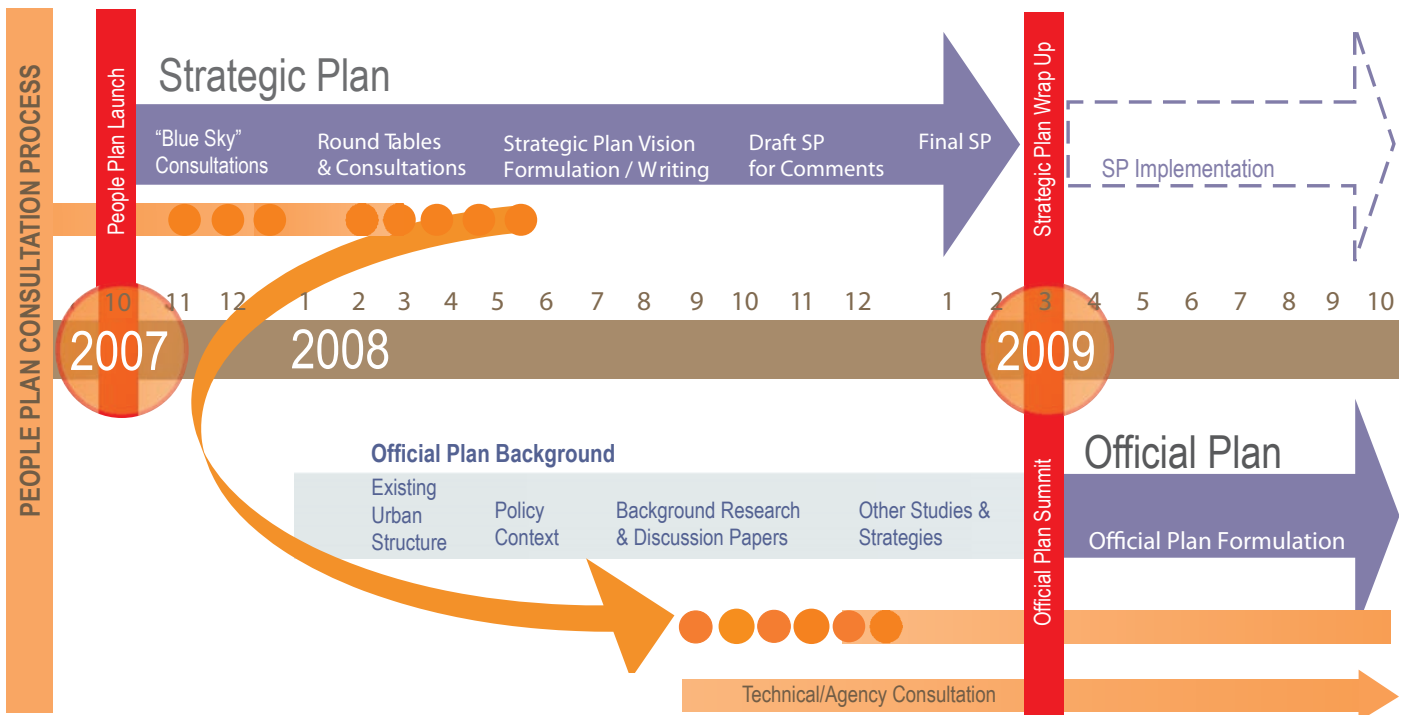
Study Process

2.1 People Plan Process to develop a new Strategic Plan and Official Plan

In October 2007, the Town initiated the People Plan Richmond Hill process to develop a new Strategic Plan and a new Official Plan, which are being developed concurrently. Between 2008 and 2010, the people of Richmond Hill will work together with Town Council and Staff through the People Plan consultation process to develop the vision for the Town's future.

Once the Strategic Plan has defined the overall goals for the Town, the Official Plan will help to implement the vision by setting out policies to guide future development and define the urban structure of the Town. Although the formulation of the Official Plan will follow the Strategic Plan, background studies are required to address such community issues as: Provincial/Regional policy context, socio-economic context, existing urban structure, growth management, economic development, environmental policies, sustainability, urban design and heritage, transportation, and housing. In addition, two priority area studies will be completed for the Regional Centre and the Downtown area.

The background and the priority areas studies will be completed by Town Staff with expert advice obtained as required from outside consultants. The Downtown Secondary Plan Area Design and Land Use Strategy is one of the priority area studies identified



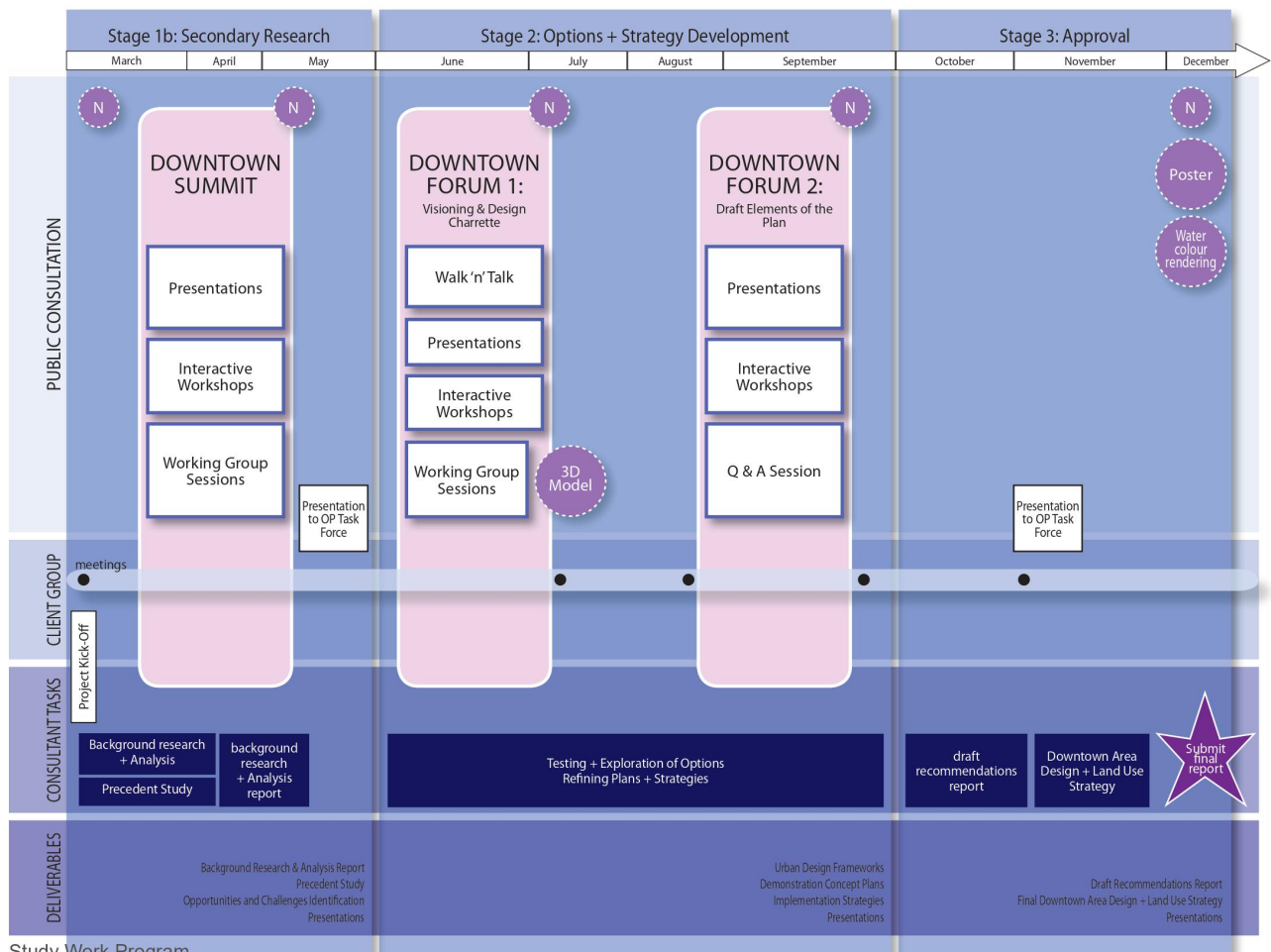
People Plan (Strategic Plan) and New Official Plan Co-ordinated Process

2.2 Approach and work program

The Richmond Hill Downtown Secondary Plan Area Design and Land Use Strategy builds on the previous plans and studies that have already been completed or are being undertaken by the Town of Richmond Hill.

The approach taken for the Downtown Secondary Plan Area Design and Land Use Strategy process is highly collaborative and is based on the following key themes:

- **Character Driven** – By introducing descriptions, demonstrations and illustrations of the intended ‘look’ and ‘feel’ of development in the Downtown, urban design ideas can become more accessible to the broader public, while introducing clarity and predictability of what changes to policy mean and intend.
- **Reinforce Existing Assets** – This process is designed to be mindful of the distinct identities of downtown as well as the unique precincts. This is in part about broad participation, but it is also about recognizing the inherent built and natural assets that make Richmond Hill unique and that ought to be protected and strengthened as change occurs. On one hand, this is about building broad support for change, on the other, it is about leveraging uniqueness as a community-building and economic development strategy.
- **Guidance for the Public Realm** – the quality of streets, open spaces and other public amenities is fundamental to the image, quality of life, economic development, tourism and cohesion of downtowns. Ensuring guidance for the quality of the public realm and urban design is a critical aspect of the approach taken for the Downtown Secondary Plan Area Design and Land Use Strategy.



Study Work Program

This study is to be completed in **3-phases** during a **9 month process**. The following is an overview of elements of each phase of this study:

The **first phase** of this study is divided into two parts, 1a and 1b. 1a involved the preliminary background information gathering and analysis undertaken by Town Staff. During this initial phase, Staff identified the existing background policy documents and plans that would inform this study. Following this preliminary information gathering stage, Stage 1b involved the team undertaking an analysis of existing conditions, and a review and analysis of the existing planning policy framework. This background reconnaissance is compiled within this report. The first phase also provided an opportunity to meet with stakeholders in the context of a Summit, which was held in early May 2008. The Downtown Summit was well attended and provided insight into the varied issues and opportunities that exist in the Downtown through representatives from a broad spectrum of interests including business owners, residents, and landowners.

The **second phase** of this study is centred on the development of options and strategies. The visioning and design charrette will involve the consultant team, the project steering committee, Town Staff, and members of the public. Design and land use options will be developed and tested during the 2.5 day Downtown Forum and presented to the public for comment. Once the preferred design direction has been established, strategies will be created for bringing the design and land use option to realization. Phase two culminates with a second public Forum where the draft Design Plan and land use strategies will be presented to the public for feedback.

The third and **final phase** of this study involves the formulation of the recommendations report, the final Downtown Secondary Plan Area Design and Land Use Strategy, and a presentation to the Official Plan Task Force.

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Five Key Directions from the Downtown Summit

1. Relocate Town hall downtown
2. Expand mix of uses from the historic core south
3. Develop 3+ stories that protect the views of the church spires
4. Improve transit, access and links
5. Develop a gateway at Major Mackenzie
6. Mix of uses, more events, walkable streets, parks, art, higher density, sensitive to historic character.

2.3 Downtown Summit

The Downtown Summit was held on May 6, 2008, at the Elgin Barrow Arena in the Richmond Hill Room. The session was intended as a focused conversation with representatives of a diversity of interests from residents, ratepayer associations, heritage groups, landowners, developers and downtown businesses. It began with an introductory presentation, followed by breakout working groups, where the participants were asked a series of questions.

The discussions focussed on several questions aimed at identifying strengths, opportunities, and issues, and culminated with a discussion of possible solutions for addressing the issues identified. The following are some of the highlights from the discussion:

Participants were asked to identify their top 3 downtowns that they felt provided valuable lessons that Downtown Richmond Hill could learn from. The downtowns suggested by participants were:

- One group – who felt that Richmond Hill’s Village Core is incomparable, suggested qualities instead of actual places.
 - Civic Pride
 - People Friendly
 - More of a European Cities model – where there are things to do and you can walk to them without having to drive
- Sparks Street, Ottawa – more about the feel of the street rather than the car-free function of the street.
- Downtown Oakville – Both a regional centre and centred on a regional arterial road.
- Bloor West Village
- Markham Village – Hwy.48 and Hwy.7
- Port Credit – has some historic elements but also has a diverse range

Downtown Summit Participants

- Mayor Dave Barrow, Mayor of the Town of Richmond Hill
- Councillor Lynn Foster
- Town of Richmond Hill Staff
- Regional Municipality of York Staff
- Property Owners
- Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church
- Big Boss Computers Inc.
- West Photo
- Crystal Water Salon and Spa
- Downtown Task Force Representatives
- Residents
- RHCOG
- Developers
- York Region Alliance to End Homelessness
- Society for the Community of Old Richmond Hill (SCORH)
- Café en Passant
- Old Mill Pond Ratepayers’ Association
- Krasman Centre

of shops and services for the neighbourhood that is located on a major arterial street.

- Although it is on a larger scale than Downtown Richmond Hill it is situated on busy streets, has walkable destinations, restaurants and shops, provides a heritage feel and flavour and provides a small town ambiance.
- Orangeville – diversity, but the street is much wider than Yonge St. and provides diversity of residential and commercial uses.
- Burlington – Heritage with a good mix of old and new and different shops and services.
- Guelph – Memory is that it is an attractive place with a good blend of different shops, services, and residential units.

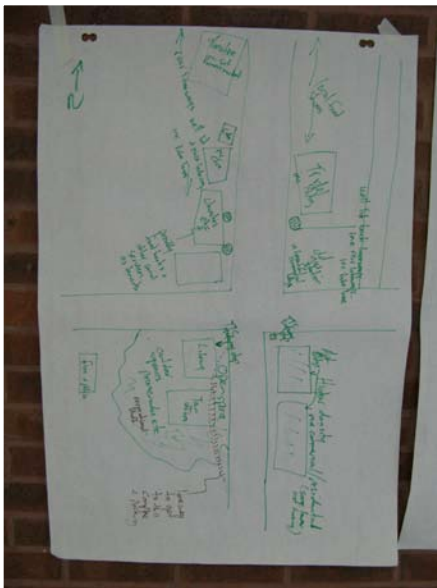
Participants were then asked to describe what the intersection of Major Mackenzie Dr. and Yonge St. would look like in the year 2025. They were asked to describe what the buildings looked like, what types of uses occupied them, and whether there were any parks or special places nearby. The following is what the groups envisioned for the intersection:

- A consensus among all the groups that the Town Hall should be relocated back downtown, to the site beside the Richmond Hill Public Library.

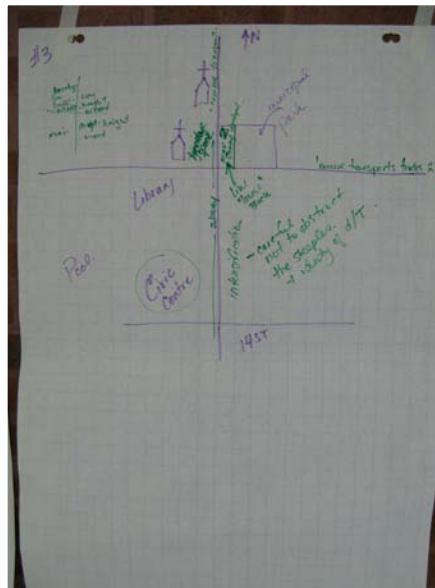


Participants at the Downtown Summit

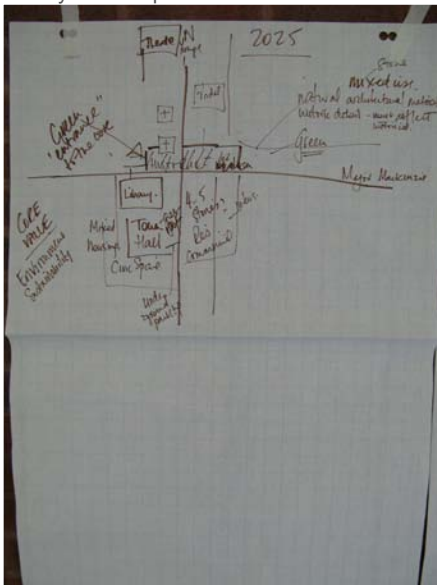
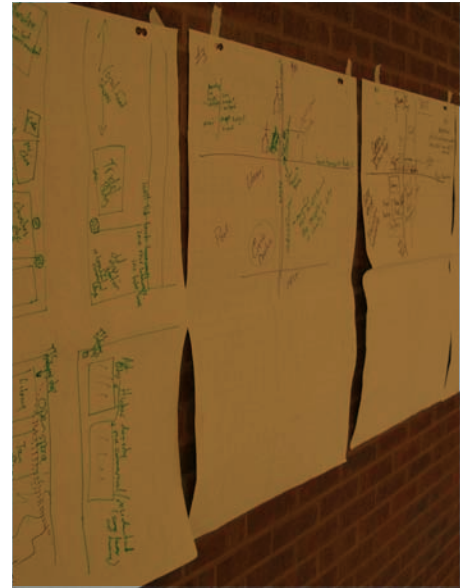
- There was general consensus that lands on the east side of Yonge Street, south of Major Mackenzie Drive provided an opportunity to expand the mix of uses from the historic core, south towards Harding Boulevard. Consensus was not reached over the type of built form that the developments should take. Some participants suggested a maximum of 3 storeys, while others expressed a desire for higher density, as long as it did not block the views of any church spires.
- Improved public transit service, access, and linkages are another area where there was resounding consensus.
- The creation of a gateway at Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street was an opportunity that all participants agreed should happen, but there was a wide range of ideas on what the gateway should be. Some suggested that it could be a tall spire that loosely resembled the church spires, while others suggested buildings or arches.



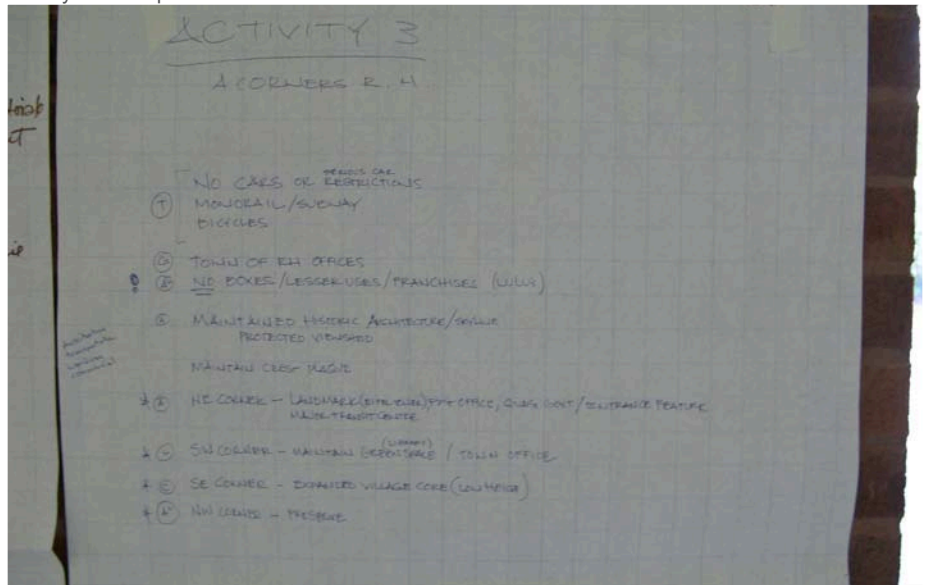
Activity 3 - Group 1



Activity 3 - Group 2



Activity 3 - Group 3



Activity 3 - Group 4

The final activity focused around issues and strategies. Participants were asked to identify and clearly define an issue they felt the Downtown was facing. After re-organizing themselves into groups around the issues raised, they were asked to describe the desired outcome and propose a possible strategy for achieving the desired outcome. The following are the issues chosen by the groups for further exploration:

Group 1:

Issue	Desired Outcome	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Public Attractions/ Spaces 	To attract and keep people in the downtown area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a public space/laneway More events centres Parkettes Development of retail space that is conducive to green spaces/public spaces (i.e. Cafés (open air) near parkettes Tours More pedestrian/bicycle pathways

Group 2:

Issue	Desired Outcome	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need higher density 	Have a higher residential density close to Yonge St (enough density to help support commercial ventures in the core).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibly larger setbacks, but one storey higher BUT sensitive to historic character Allow density to increase but keep historic flavour .

Group 3:

Issue	Desired Outcome	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity No reason to go downtown, no desirable diversity 	Places to go, shopping, entertainment, services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theatre, increased residential and commercial uses More village events (art sale, concerts in park, sidewalk café/new building setbacks Rear yard cafés (lane) Walkable streets Pocket parks Public art

Group 4:

Issue	Desired Outcome	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety and range of stores 	Food stores and other staples for day-to-day consumption High order- theatre Lower order – like cafés Specialty shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new development on Yonge St needs to be mixed-use commercial/residential Range of sizes of commercial space to accommodate variety of uses.

3

P o l i c y C o n t e x t

The Downtown Secondary Plan Area Design and Land Use Strategy (SPAD + LUS) will be consistent with the policy direction put forward in the PPS.

Provincial Policy Statement (2005)

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) came into effect on March 1, 2005. The PPS puts forward a vision for Ontario's land use planning system that focuses growth within settlement areas and away from significant or sensitive resources and areas that may pose a risk to public health and safety. Downtown Richmond Hill is located within a designated settlement area.

The PPS states that settlement areas shall be the focus of growth, and their vitality and regeneration shall be promoted. Planning authorities (Town of Richmond Hill, Region of York) shall identify and promote opportunities for intensification and redevelopment where it can be accommodated in settlement areas. The municipality is directed to:

- plan for densities and a mix of land uses which efficiently use land and resources, infrastructure and public service facilities;
- plan for compact form, establish and implement minimum targets for intensification and redevelopment
- protect natural and heritage resources;
- establish and implement phasing policies to ensure targets are achieved and development is orderly; and,
- coordinate planning with other agencies.

In addition, the Province directs the municipality to integrate transportation and land use and to support plans for transit.

Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006)

The Downtown SPAD + LUS will be consistent with the policy direction put forward in the Growth Plan, with specific emphasis on how to direct growth within the Downtown (an existing built-up area), along Yonge Street (which meets the definition of an intensification corridor), and on brownfields and greyfields

The Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan) came into effect on June 16, 2006. The Growth Plan puts forward a vision for building stronger, more prosperous communities by better managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe to 2031. Overall, the Growth Plan is about building complete communities, which the Plan defines as communities that are well-designed, offer transportation choices, accommodate people at all stages of life and have the right mix of housing, a good range of jobs, and easy access to stores and services to meet daily needs.

The Growth Plan envisions increasing intensification of the existing built-up area, with a focus on urban growth centres, intensification corridors, major transit station areas, brownfield sites and greyfields. Downtown Richmond Hill is located within an existing built-up area, on Yonge Street, which meets the definition of an intensification corridor, and contains a number of brownfield and greyfield sites

The Province is directing new growth to built up areas through intensification of mixed use, transit supportive, pedestrian friendly urban environments.

Higher density mixed use development on Yonge Street is to support high order transit.

By 2015, 40% of all residential development is to be within the built up area. Intensification targets are to be established in the Official Plan based on intensification targets established by York Region.

Through this study we will address the direction of The Growth Plan by exploring intensification in downtown including the location, type, scale of development, minimum density targets to support transit, range and mix of housing, mix of uses, provision of high quality public open space, and the transition of built form to adjacent areas.

Region of York Official Plan

The York Region Official Plan (ROP) was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 1994. The office consolidation of the Plan reflects the status of the ROP as of September 1, 2007. The ROP provides policy direction that will help guide economic, environmental, and community-building decisions affecting the use of land within the Region's nine area municipalities, including Richmond Hill. The ROP puts forward a vision for York Region of creating strong, caring, and safe communities.

The Region of York Official Plan identifies downtown Richmond Hill within the Urban Envelope. It is defined as an Urban Area. Yonge Street is a Regional Corridor with a right of way of up to 45 m planned for rapid transit. Major MacKenzie is defined as a Local Corridor with a right of way of up to 36 m and planned for regional transit. Richmond Hill also meets the definition of a Local Centre.

The Region's objective for a Local Centre is to provide a concentration of residential, business, institutional and human service activities for the surrounding community. The Region's objective for a Regional Corridor to achieve attractive and vibrant development to support public transit and link Regional Centres.

The Region is targeting a minimum of 30% of its population increase to Urban Areas, towns and villages.

The Region's Official Plan directs local municipalities to prepare Secondary Plans to promote infill and redevelopment in areas of transition and in Local Centres, such as downtown Richmond Hill. This Study addresses the Region's policy to identify:

- a range and mix of uses;
- transit facilities;
- focal points;
- integrated open space and pedestrian/cycling system;
- a pedestrian friendly environment;
- connections with surrounding areas;
- improvements to parking for local business; and,
- conservation and enhancement to cultural heritage resources.

The Downtown SPAD + LUS will be consistent with the policy direction put forward in the ROP. Attention will be paid to articulating the future character of this Local Centre.

The Region supports identifying the different conditions of each Regional Corridor as will occur through this Study. The Region's policy directs the identification of Key Development Areas that have the greatest opportunity for compact and mixed use development. These areas should support an overall long term density target of 2.5 FSI.

This Study will address the Region's policy regarding the development and redevelopment in Local Corridors – such as Major MacKenzie. This Study will address the Region's policy to:

- establish the range of residential and commercial uses;
- identify density and performance standards;
- establish consistent setback provisions; and,
- determine site specific parking

Region of York Transit Oriented Development Guidelines

The Richmond Hill Downtown SPAD + LUS will be consistent with the guidelines brought forward in the TOD by ensuring that intensification along the Yonge Street corridor is consistent with the density requirements in both the TOD and the ROP; that built form is compact; and, public realm initiatives and improvements encourage a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment conducive for walking. The Richmond Hill Downtown SPAD + LUS will pay particular attention to the guidelines around distances to transit stops, which suggest that 90% of residents should be no more than a 5 minute (500m) walk, and 50% of residents should be no more than a 200m walk from a transit stop.

York Region's Transit Oriented Development Guidelines (TOD) builds on the policies brought forward in the ROP and reinforces the urban structure of centres and corridors through these guidelines, which encourage intensification to support public transit. The TOD supports intensification that is concentrated around transit stations along ROP designated Corridors and in Centres that are of a compact form and well designed. The TOD Guidelines encourage a mix of land-uses along transit routes with improved connections to existing and potential transit stations. The TOD is developed around 6 themes: Pedestrians, Parking, Land Use, Built Form, Connections, and Implementation.

Town of Richmond Hill Strategic Plan (2001)

The Town of Richmond Hill Strategic Plan was approved by Council on November 12, 2001. The Strategic Plan provides overall direction and determines the long-term vision for the Town. It establishes priorities and how to reach them. Under the goal of enhancing and expanding economic opportunities, the Strategic Plan prioritizes the preservation, enhancement, and development of the Downtown Area.

In 2007, the Town initiated the process of completing a new Strategic Plan. The process to develop the new Strategic Plan was launched in conjunction with the process to develop the new Official Plan on October 23, 2007. A number of public consultation meetings were carried out in November and December 2007, and early 2008. The new Strategic Plan is anticipated to be complete by early 2009.

The Downtown SPAD + LUS will need to be consistent with the vision and key directions put forward in the new Strategic Plan. The timing of the final Downtown SPAD + LUS is designed so that the finalization of certain aspects of the new Strategic Plan and the SPAD + LUS will be synchronized.

Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan (1981)

The Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan (OP) was approved by Council on December 24, 1981. As noted above, the Town recently initiated the process of completing a new OP and a new Strategic Plan. The process to develop the new OP will run concurrently with the process to develop the new Strategic Plan. After the new Strategic Plan is complete in early 2009, one of the key ways the Town will implement the new Strategic Plan will be through the new OP. Between 2008 and 2010, Town Staff will work with the people of Richmond Hill to develop solutions to address such community issues as: growth and intensification, natural and cultural heritage, urban design, transportation, and housing. The new OP is anticipated to be complete in early 2010.

The Downtown SPAD + LUS will be consistent with the vision and policy directions put forward in the new OP. The timing of the strategy will directly hinge on the finalization of certain aspects of the new OP, and both will be synchronized with the completion of the SPAD + LUS.

Richmond Hill Secondary Plans

Three different Secondary Plans outline land use planning policies for the Downtown Area. The northern portion of the Downtown Area is located within the Yonge-Crosby Secondary Plan Area (OPA No.74), the central portion is located within the Central Business District Secondary Plan Area (OPA No. 32), and the southern portion is located within the Yonge-Weldrick Secondary Plan (OPA No.130).

Central Business District Secondary Plan (OPA No.32)

The Central Business District (CBD) Secondary Plan was adopted in 1985 and establishes land use policies for the central portion of the Downtown Area. The Secondary Plan was developed to build upon the existing structure of the area by recognizing the practical problems of an established commercial area in competition with new commercial development and provide for public and private programs to combat the threat of decline. The Secondary Plan identifies seven land use designations, in which a range of general commercial, office, low, medium and high density residential, institutional, mixed commercial-residential, and open space uses are contemplated.

The Downtown SPAD + LUS may incorporate elements from the three previous secondary plans that covered the Downtown Area, and will be consistent with the overarching principles espoused in the secondary plans.

Yonge-Crosby Secondary Plan (OPA No.74)

The Yonge-Crosby Secondary Plan was adopted in 1991 and establishes land use policies for the northern portion of the Downtown Area. The Secondary Plan recognizes existing uses and provides guidelines for the redevelopment, given the uses that existed at the time the Plan was adopted. The Plan identifies four main land use designations, in which a range of service commercial, office, recreational, institutional, residential and open space uses are contemplated. A number of architectural policies are incorporated to enhance/complement the uses that existed at the time that the Plan was adopted.

Yonge-Weldrick Secondary Plan (OPA No.130)

The Yonge-Weldrick Secondary Plan was adopted in 1994 and establishes land use policies for the southern portion of the Downtown Area. The Secondary Plan recognizes the uses that existed at the time that the Plan was adopted to provide for the long-term stability of the area and establishes the Town Centre (i.e. the south-west corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street). The Plan identifies five main land use designations, in which a range of residential, commercial, office, institutional, recreational, and open space uses are contemplated. A number of urban design principles are outlined which are intended to protect the views up the Hill to the landmark steeples.

AMENDMENT No.33 – COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT POLICY (1985)

OPA 33 was intended to guide improvements/rehabilitation of the Downtown Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges Commercial Areas and the Lake Wilcox Residential Area.

The goal of OPA 33 is to maintain, rehabilitate and redevelop the existing physical environment while accommodating the social and economic priorities within the community and continuing to make it an attractive, safe and efficient place in which to live, work and visit

Key objectives were to:

- implement improvements to the physical and social facilities and services in a planned and efficient use of municipal capital expenditures
- maximize funding from various federal and provincial agencies;
- promote private investment in the upgrading of existing buildings and property in a manner compatible with the overall community interest;
- participate in and or encourage projects and programs which improve the Town's physical environment and expand the economic base; and,
- evaluate redevelopment and infill development proposals in the context of the overall community interest.

The Downtown SPAD + LUS will be consistent with the policy directions put forward in OPA 33, by providing a comprehensive vision and land use strategy to guide growth and development in Downtown Richmond Hill, which will help contribute to the revitalization of the area.

Official Plan Amendment No.231

This Amendment to the Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan arose out of an Ontario Municipal Board decision related to lots 22,23, and 24 (Municipal address 10097 and 10101 Yonge Street and 70 Church Street), also referred to as the “Tridel Site.”

OPA 231 directed height on Yonge and Church Streets as follows:

- height of buildings fronting onto Yonge Street should generally be two storeys (8.5m);
- any portion of the building that exceeds the height should step back 3m from the base of the building façade and comply with an angular plane of 45° measured from 13.74m above the Yonge Street property line;
- maximum portion of any building along Yonge Street should not exceed 7 storeys (24.3m) excluding mechanical penthouses.
- buildings that also front onto Church Street, within 11m of the Church Street property line, should be limited to two storeys (11m) in height and used for residential purposes only;
- buildings should apply a 37° angular plane measured from the west property line of the residential property located on the east side of Church Street and should not exceed 6 storeys (21m); and,
- portions of the building that extend towards Church Street from Yonge Street that exceeds the 6 storey (21m) height limit, shall comply with the 37° angular plane.

Theatre Precinct Plan

The Theatre Precinct is approximately 2.874 Ha (7.1 acres), with only the portion of the block designated as Special Policy, comprising 2.315 Ha (5.72 acres), designated for the Performing Arts Theatre. The objective of the overall Development Plan is to introduce a mix of uses, involving a variety of landscaping, lanes, and open lands to the south and west of the theatre, with the proposed parking area eventually being relocated below grade.

The Plan is intended to provide a major public use on Yonge Street, as a stimulus for continued redevelopment in the area. The proposed Theatre, including the abutting surface parking areas, is permitted in both the General Commercial and Residential Second Density zoning categories.

Town Hall Feasibility Study

In January 2008, the Town of Richmond Hill began a study of the feasibility of relocating the municipal offices from 225 East Beaver Creek Road to another location. This feasibility study builds on previous plans and studies that proposed relocating the Town Hall back to the Downtown Area on the southwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street, in an area referred to as the “Civic Centre Block.” This Study will provide direction on whether the site on the southwest corner of Major Mackenzie Dr. and Yonge St. is still suitable

The Downtown SPAD + LUS will have consideration for the design principles and guidelines outlined in this site specific amendment to the Official Plan. The guidelines around height and transition will provide guidance for the Downtown SPAD + LUS.

The Theatre Precinct Development Plan provides guidelines for built form and a phasing program for development of the block. Any guidelines and strategies developed for the Downtown SPAD + LUS will build upon the guidelines contained within this Precinct Plan with respect to this block.

As part of the comprehensive vision, the Downtown SPAD + LUS will provide high-level design principles and strategies for the site. The timing of the Downtown SPAD + LUS will directly hinge on the conclusions of the business case reached through this feasibility study, and the process has been scheduled to ensure that the two studies are synchronized. Regardless of whether the business case is made for relocating the Town Hall to the Civic Centre Block, the Downtown SPAD + LUS will provide design principles that are consistent with Regional and Municipal policies, irrespective of the end use that is located on the Civic Centre Block.

for a new Town Hall, the types of uses that will complement a potential civic centre, and options and design solutions if Council decides not to proceed with a new civic facility.

Key Directions from the Provincial and Regional Policy Context:

1. The Province directs that by 2015 40% of growth will be in built up areas.
2. The Region is targeting a minimum of 30% of its population increase to Urban Areas, towns and villages
3. The Province and the Region identify areas such as downtown Richmond Hill as a location to focus growth.
4. The Province and the Region direct growth to be compact, mixed use to support high order transit.

4

Socio-Economic Context

To set the socio-economic context for both the Town of Richmond Hill and the Downtown, the following is an overview of two documents prepared by the Town Staff that provide a snapshot of the demographic, social and economic conditions using information from Statistics Canada. This information is also useful in projecting future trends and ensuring the needs of future generations in Richmond Hill, and in particular, the Downtown.

Richmond Hill Socio-Economic Study

This study was undertaken as a background study for Richmond Hill's Strategic and Official Plans to understand the current and future states of the Town's population.

Richmond Hill experienced the sixth fastest growth among the large urban municipalities in Ontario over the last five years. Richmond Hill's population will continue to grow over the next twenty five years, although at a slower rate than the past. The economy of the Greater Toronto Area and the Greater Golden Horseshoe is anticipated to continue to be the focus of growth in Canada and Ontario, positively positioning Richmond Hill for growth. The Town is well positioned to accommodate growth as directed by Provincial and Regional policy, especially in light of the transit system enhancements, as well as the rising cost of automobile use.

The study finds that Richmond Hill has a diverse and changing population in terms of cultures, languages and faiths. This population is highly educated, affluent and rapidly growing. The residents of this area are highly dependent on the use of cars, so congestion is an ongoing problem. In addition, the Town of Richmond Hill is the most densely populated out of comparable regions.

Richmond Hill has a high proportion of large households, and is culturally diverse with many visible minorities, with a prominence of Chinese, Arab, and West Indian groups.

Single-detached homes are predominant, but are fewer than in comparable communities in York Region.

The study also looked at trends that will influence the Town's services as well as opportunities and challenges that may be faced. In the next 25 years, the population of Richmond Hill will continue to grow, although it will be a growth of the aging, as the youth populations will plateau. The area will become increasingly diverse, as well as increasingly affluent, with an expected rising household income. Factors influencing the economic profile include lowering labour participation rates and declining manufacturing jobs, while transit commitments will facilitate the expansion of business services and complement other sectors within the urban growth centre.

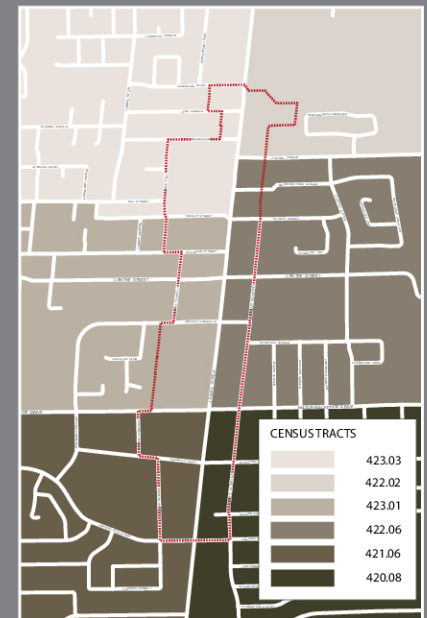
A challenge for Richmond Hill in the future will be the lack of developable space compared to the expected influx of potential residents, and as a result, provincial policies will change settlement and development patterns

in Richmond Hill. Additionally, the economic disparity of the area will increase, posing a problem for a neighbourhood that will have issues accommodating citizens with a range of incomes.

Downtown Demographic Profile

A demographic profile was completed for Downtown Richmond Hill based on the 2006 census. The demographic profile is made up of 6 census tracts covering an area larger than the study area for the Downtown SPAD + LUS. The census tracts cover an area extending from Weldrick Road West to the south, along the rail corridor/Bayview Avenue to the east, Elgin Mills Road to the north, and Bathurst Street to the west.

From a review of the statistics from the 2006 census, Downtown Richmond Hill is a relatively stable area. While population growth differs between census tracts, generally the area is experiencing minimal growth, with relatively small changes in population growth during the period between 2001 and 2006.



Downtown BIA Initiation

The Downtown Task Force has worked to facilitate the creation of a Business Improvement Area (BIA) among business and property owners in the Central Business District since its inception in 2003. On February 27, 2008, the Downtown Task Force and supporting staff attended a public meeting to which all downtown business and property owners were invited. The Committee for the Formation of a Downtown Richmond Hill BIA addressed the group providing information to attendees on the benefits and costs of forming a BIA. Over 30 individuals attended this meeting, including the Task Force, staff, members of the Formation Committee, downtown businesses and landowners, as well as other interested downtown stakeholders.

A request to designate a Downtown Richmond Hill BIA was presented at the Downtown Task Force meeting on April 30, 2008. It was recommended Staff proceed with the process to establish a BIA in the Downtown Core and forward a report to the Committee of the Whole with respect to the process, including a draft notice and by-law. Staff anticipates that this report will be brought before Committee of the Whole within the next few months and that the designation process could begin by mid-2008.



Key Directions from the Socio-Economic Context:

1. Downtown Richmond Hill is well positioned to accommodate growth given that there is little undeveloped land available in the Town's urban boundary.
2. Downtown Richmond Hill is well positioned to deliver on the Provincial and Regional requirements for intensification, especially in light of the commitment to improve transit and the rising cost of automobile use.
3. Population will continue to grow and be dominated by persons over 65 years old.
4. Richmond Hill will continue to become increasingly diverse with an opportunity to provide culturally diverse services and integrating people of diverse cultures.



Existing Conditions Analysis

An analysis of the existing physical conditions and regulatory framework was undertaken according to the following themes:

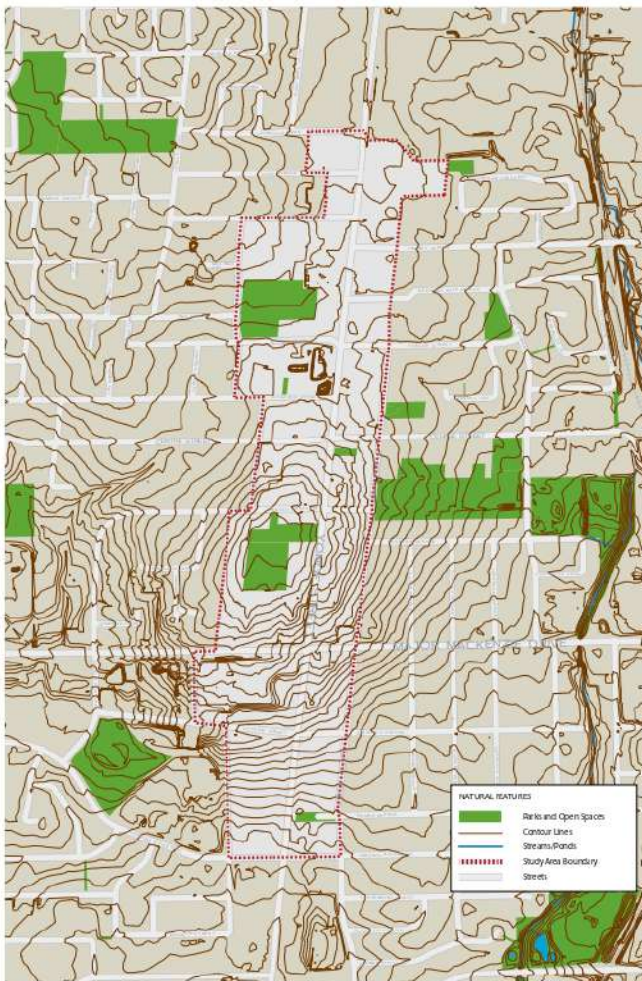
- Physical Patterns
- Land Use
- Circulation
- Built Form.

This analysis sets the context in which the Downtown Secondary Plan Area Design and Land Use Strategy will be shaped.

5.1 Physical Patterns

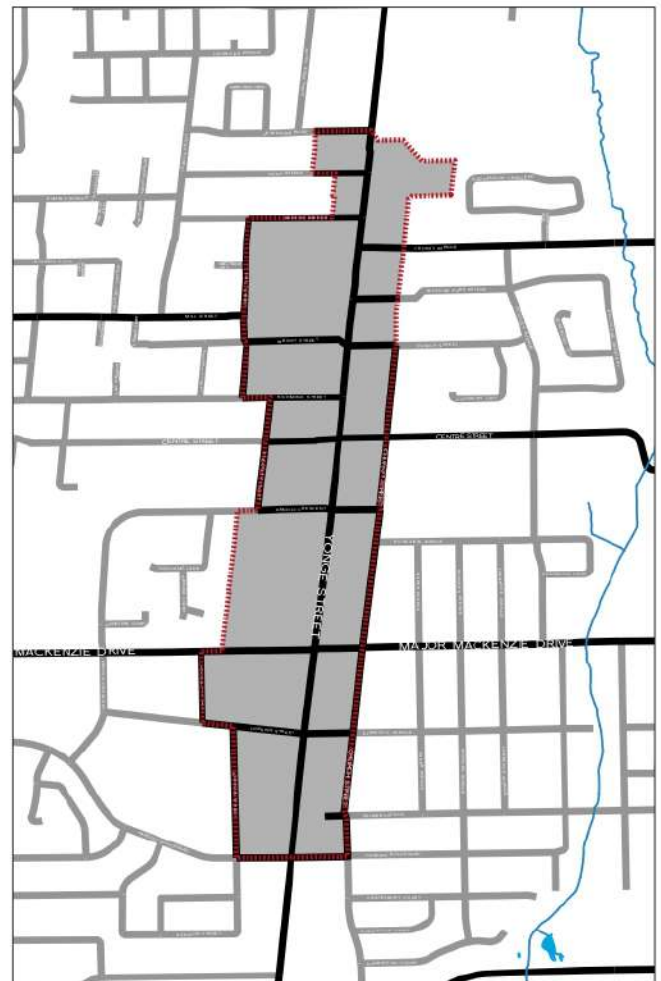
Natural Features

- Downtown sits at a high point of elevation within the Town of Richmond Hill, with the peak occurring around the McConaghy Centre.
- German Mills Creek runs along the eastern edge of the Downtown.
- Downtown is located directly south of the Oak Ridges Moraine, an ecologically sensitive area.



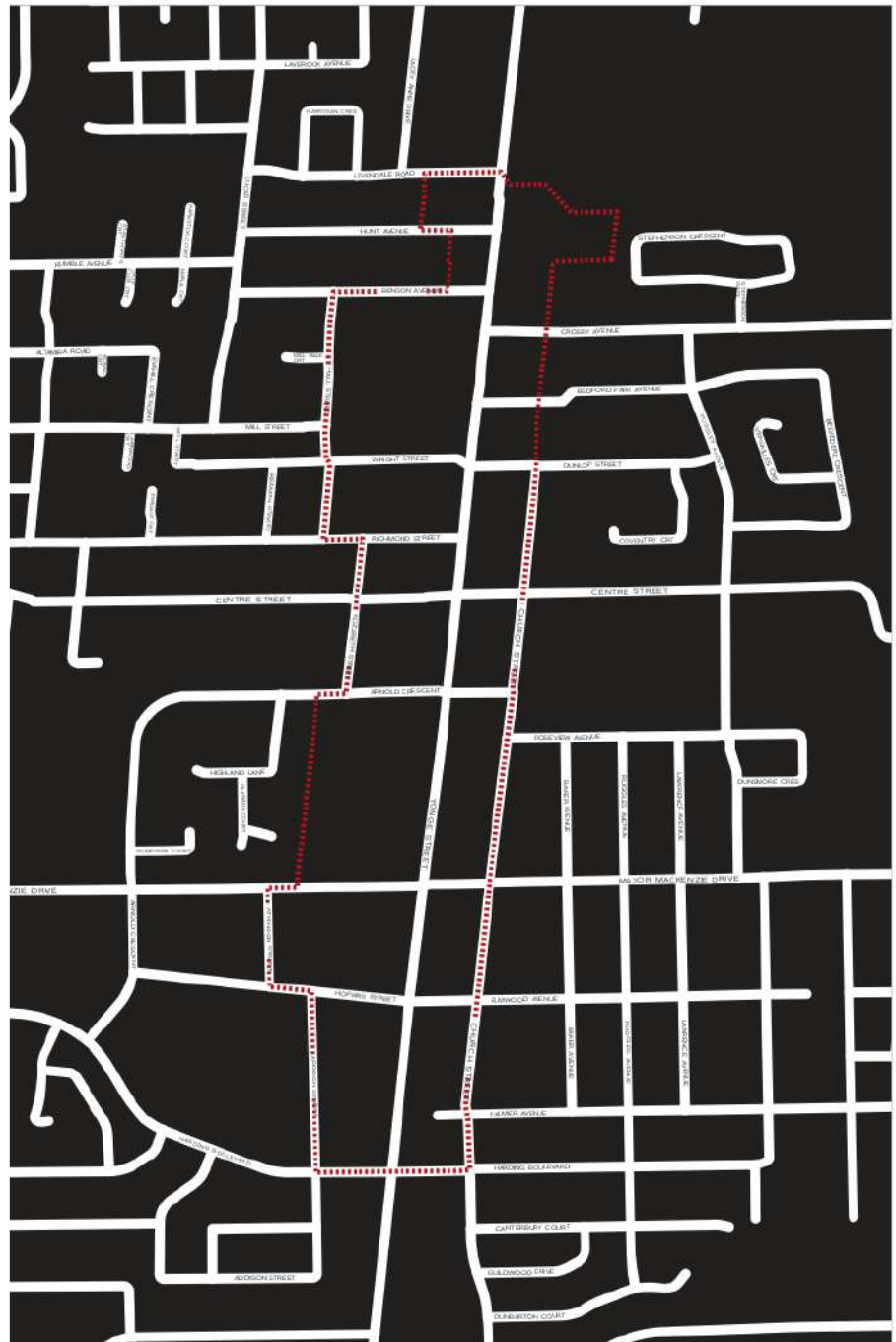
Street Network

- Streets are primarily oriented east-west, with Yonge Street acting as the primary north-south spine. Church Street is the exception.
- The streets within the study area are built on a grid network, that move towards a modified grid pattern in the adjacent residential neighbourhoods.
- Only Centre Street and Elmwood Avenue provides a direct connection across Yonge Street. Other local streets terminate at Yonge Street.



Block Structure

- A mix of small and mid-sized blocks define Downtown Richmond Hill. The blocks are larger as one moves north and west away from the commercial and historic areas.
- Blocks on the east side of Yonge Street, south of Lorne Street are of a finer grain grid network, which is more supportive of walking.
- Blocks on the east side of Yonge Street, south of Dunlop Street are more consistent in size with frontages along Yonge Street ranging from 165m to 330m, and a depth of 100m to 125m.
- The shallow lot depths that exist on the east side of Yonge Street present challenges for certain types of future development, and will require innovative solutions to address the challenges.
- Blocks on the west side of Yonge Street are longer, disconnecting the street grid.
- Blocks range in depth from 150m (south of Major Mackenzie Drive) to 450m (at Levendale Road) on the west side of Yonge Street.



Parks/ Open Space

- There are a number of significant parks and open spaces in or close to the study area.
- Open spaces are located throughout the downtown area, and are typically associated with an institutional use such as a school or with a public recreational use. There are no clear linkages to the parks and open spaces.
- Opportunities exist to provide new types of urban open spaces within the Downtown that provide opportunities for gathering.
- A paved space associated with the Centre for the Performing Arts and Ransom Parkette are currently the only formal gathering spaces within the downtown.

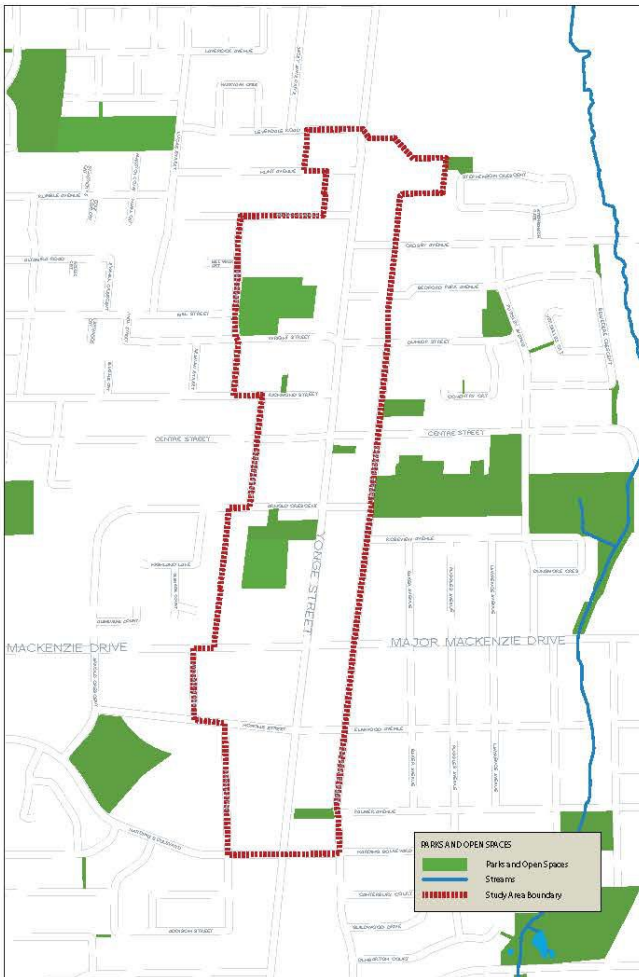
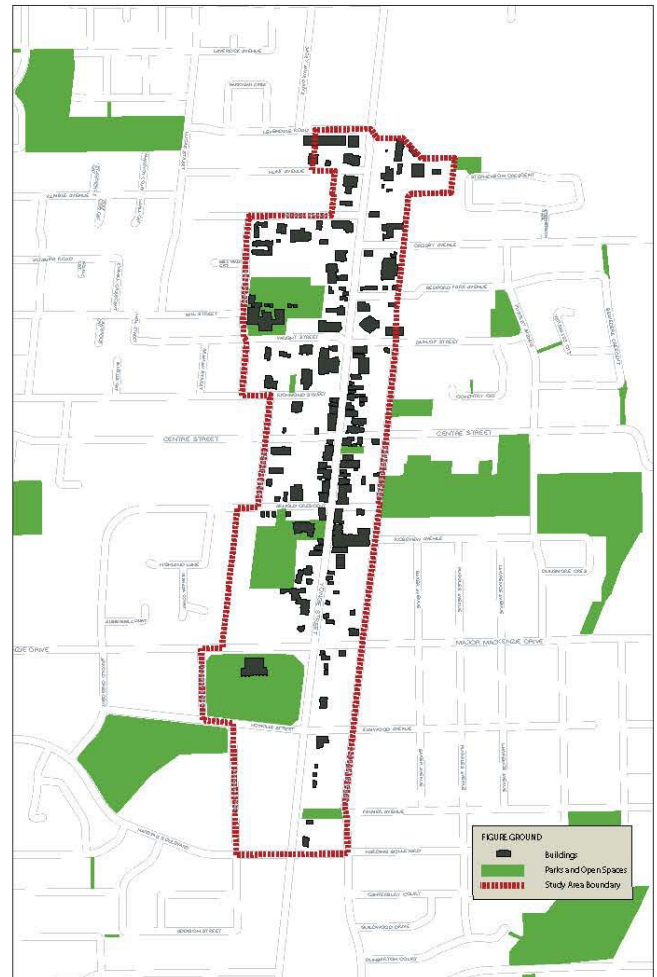


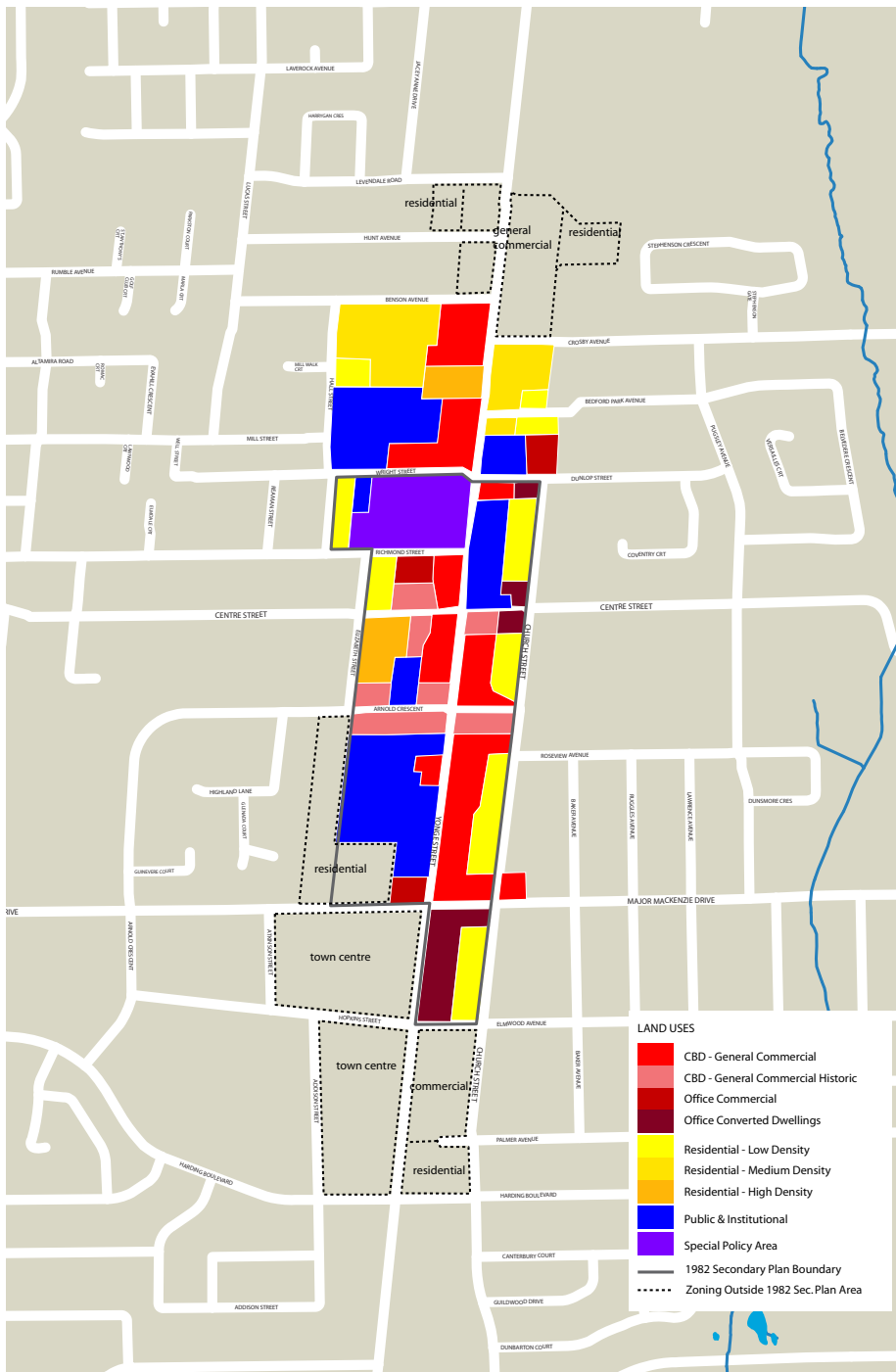
Figure Ground

- Continuous buildings placed close to the street edge exist between the McConaghy Seniors Centre and Wright/ Dunlop Streets, creating a well defined 'urban room' along Yonge Street.
- In other areas, the placement of buildings are inconsistent in how they relate to the street.
- Smaller footprints correspond to the historic Village Core Area.



Planned Land Use

- Official Plan designated land uses generally reflect the existing conditions with CBD General Commercial, CBD General Commercial Historic, Office Commercial, and Office Converted Dwellings located along Yonge Street.
- The southwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street has been designated as Town Centre which will include a mix of uses including the existing public library and the potential relocation of the Town Hall.
- The east portions of the blocks fronting onto Yonge Street and Church Street are designated as Residential – Low Density, providing a transition to the residential uses east of Church Street. The majority of these are presently either vacant or being used as parking associated with the existing commercial uses.

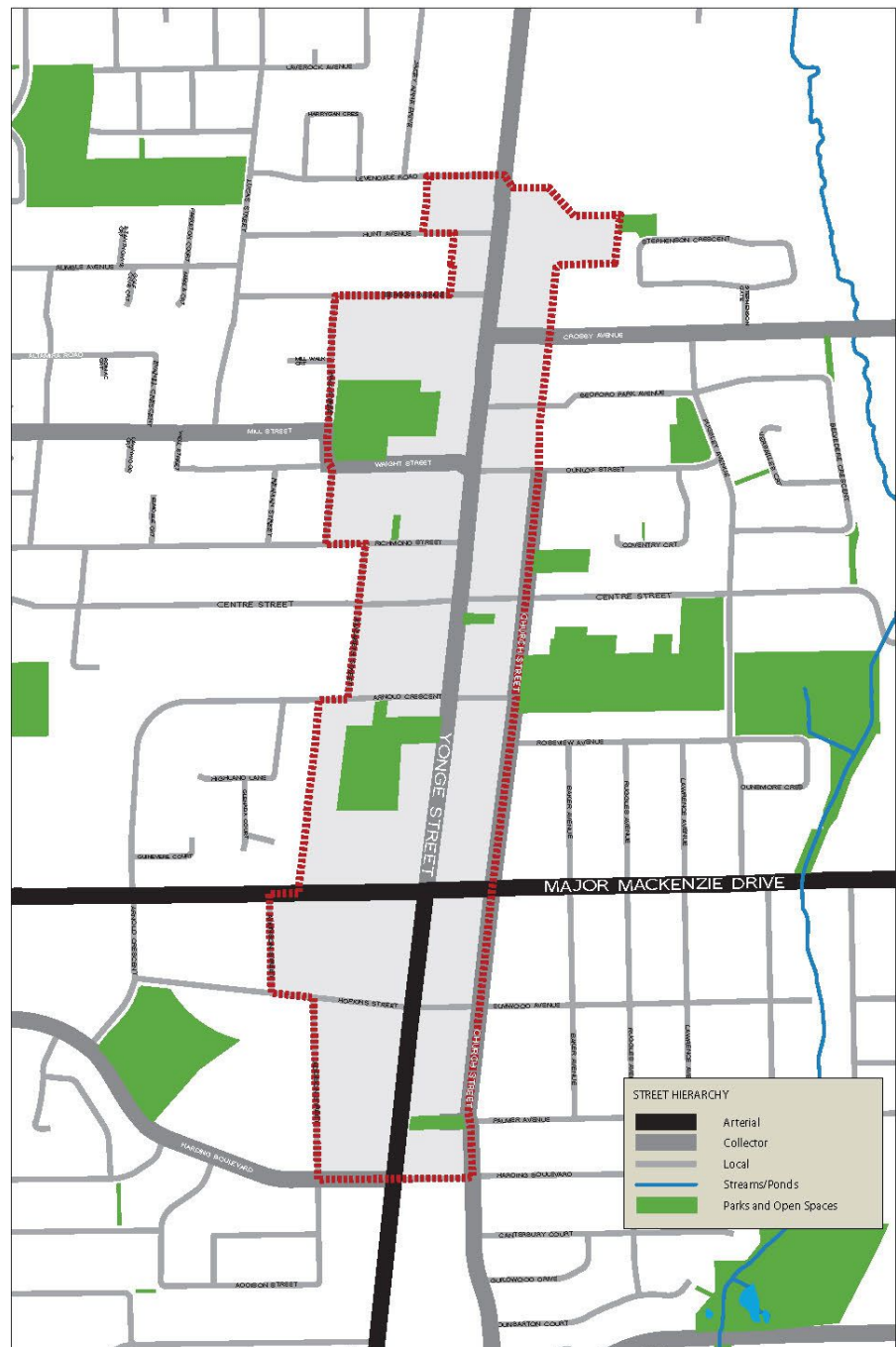


5.3 Circulation

Street Hierarchy

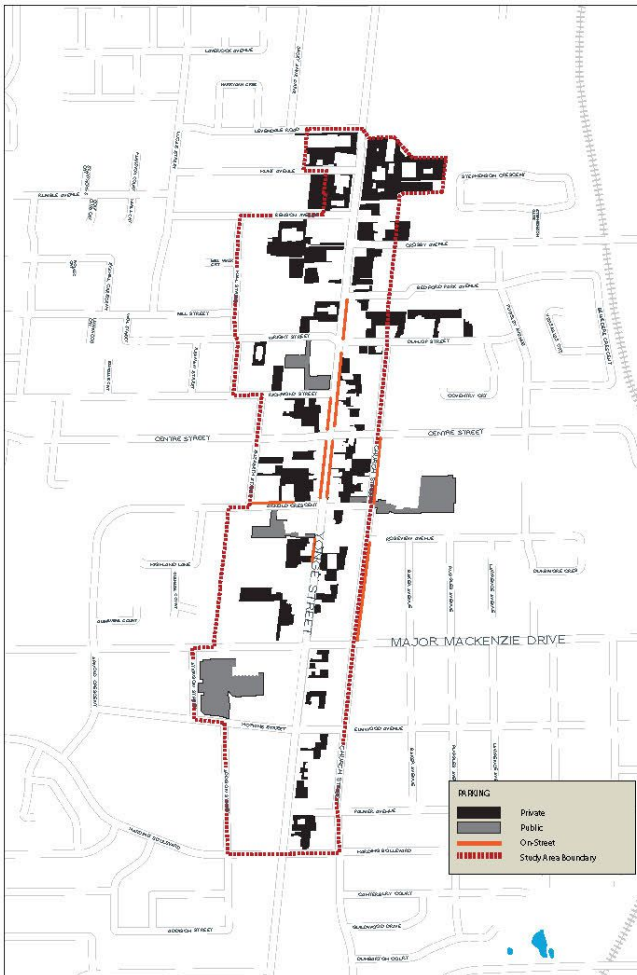
(as per Schedule 4 of the Official Plan)

- Downtown is served by two major arterials, Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street.
- Downtown is supported by a network of collector streets within the study area that includes:
 - Yonge Street (north of Major Mackenzie Dr.);
 - Church Street (south of Dunlop Street);
 - Crosby Avenue;
 - Mill Street/ Wright Street; and,
 - Harding Boulevard
- Church Street provides an additional north-south collector route and provides access to the rear of the properties fronting Yonge Street on the east side. This condition exists only on the east side, with no comparable north-south route on the west side of Yonge Street.
- The rest of the area is interwoven with a web of local streets.
- There appears to be a clearly defined hierarchy of streets in the Downtown that functions well.
- Opportunities exist for improving Yonge Street north of Major Mackenzie Drive, where Yonge Street transitions from 4-lanes to 2-lanes with on-street parking.



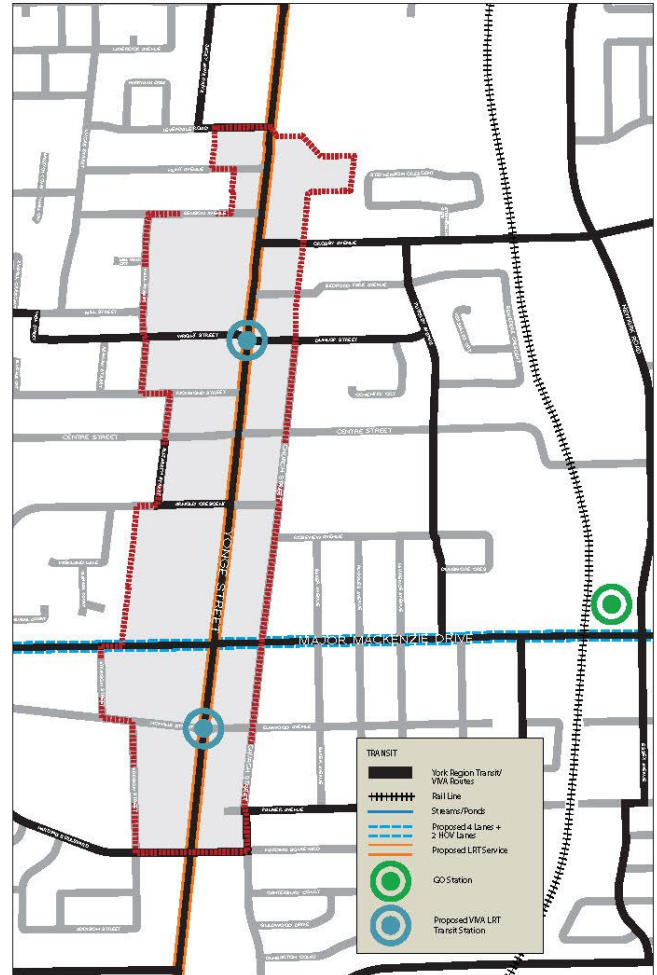
Parking

- Downtown Richmond Hill has 2736 parking spaces available according to an inventory completed in 1997, 2437 of which are off-street and 299 on-street spaces.
- There are 5 publicly owned surface parking lots, 3 located within the commercial core, with a total of 15% of the parking supply available to the general public. 85% is on private property.
- Public parking is located within walking distance of many of the Downtown businesses.
- The majority of the parking is privately owned and serves individual properties.
- The existing parking surfaces are not shared between businesses/properties.
- Opportunities exist to provide a strategy for sharing existing parking thereby increasing the amount available for all businesses in the Downtown, while potentially enabling intensification



Transit

- The Downtown is well served by local and regional public transit.
- The Newkirk GO Train Station provides connections to Downtown Toronto.
- VIVA and York Region Transit provide connections with the subway and surrounding areas.
- There is a proposed Light Rapid Transit (LRT) along Yonge Street through the Downtown by 2009, which will make it even more accessible.
- An LRT transit station is proposed for the Yonge Street and Hopkins Street intersection as well as Yonge Street at Wright/ Dunlop Streets.

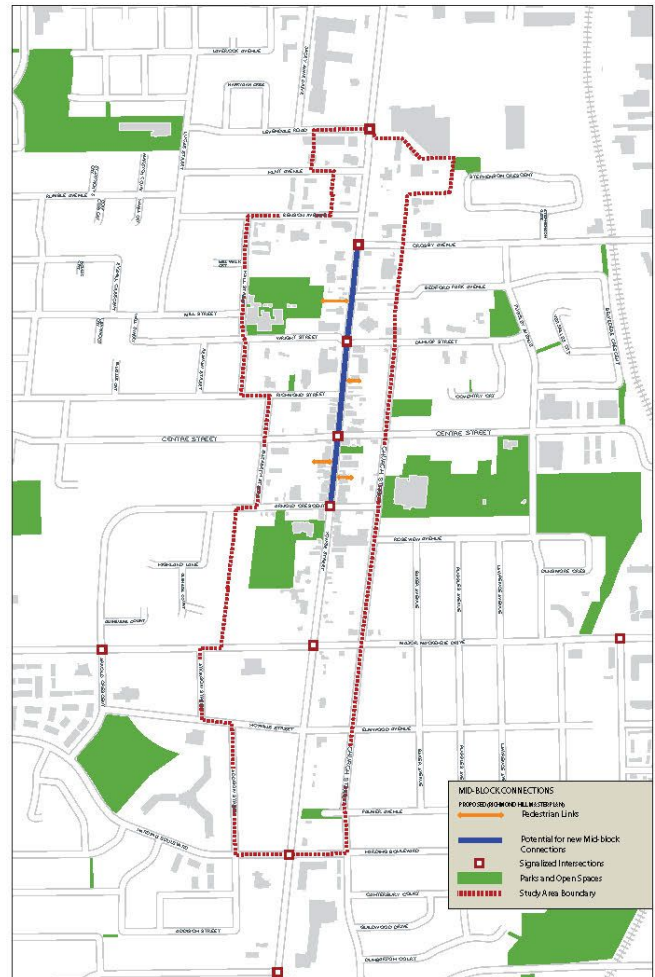
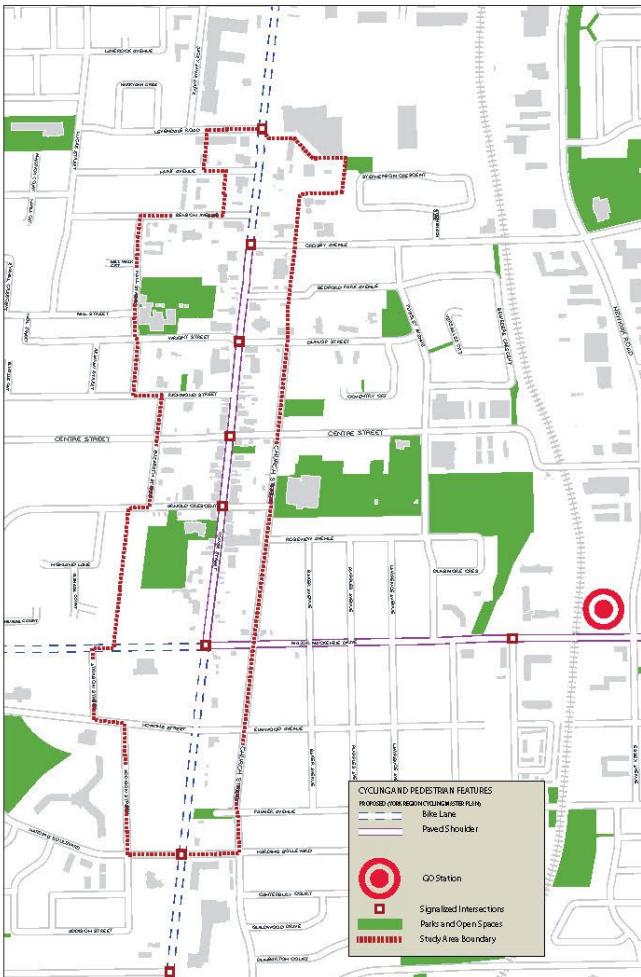


Pedestrian & Bicycle Network

- Bicycle lanes are proposed along Yonge Street south of Major Mackenzie Drive and along Major Mackenzie Drive west of Yonge Street.
- The Downtown is served by an extensive network of sidewalks, associated with all streets.
- An opportunity may exist to provide better pedestrian connections from Downtown to the existing GO Train Station.
- Providing a bicycle lane in its own dedicated lane along the narrower segment of Yonge Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Wright/ Dunlop Streets may present a conflict with other modes of transportation.

Mid block connections

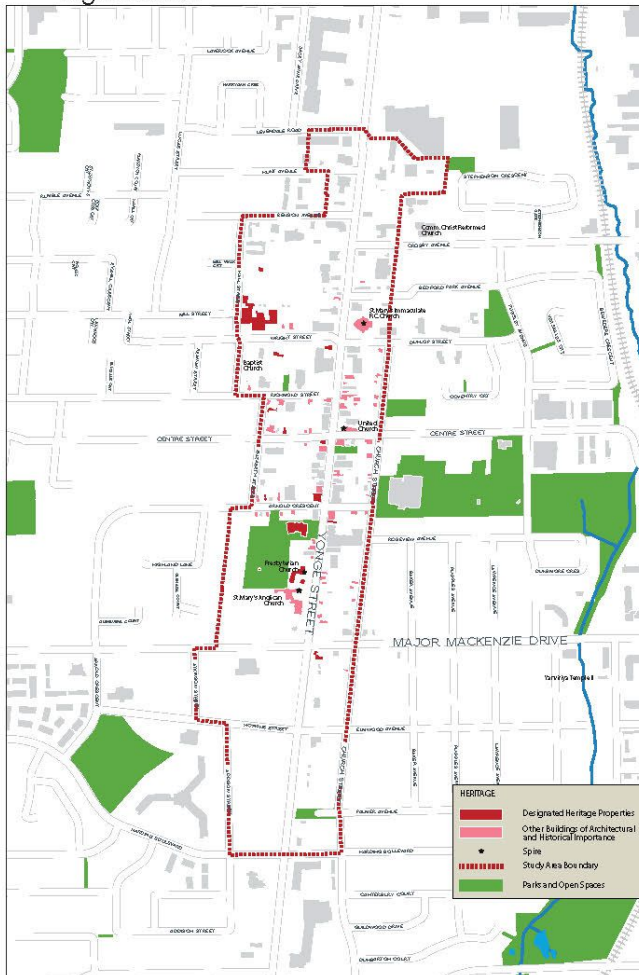
- Several mid-block pedestrian links connect Yonge Street with the areas behind the properties on both the east and west sides.
- There may be opportunities to provide more mid-block pedestrian connections south of Arnold Crescent and north of Crosby Avenue along Yonge Street.



5.4 Built Form

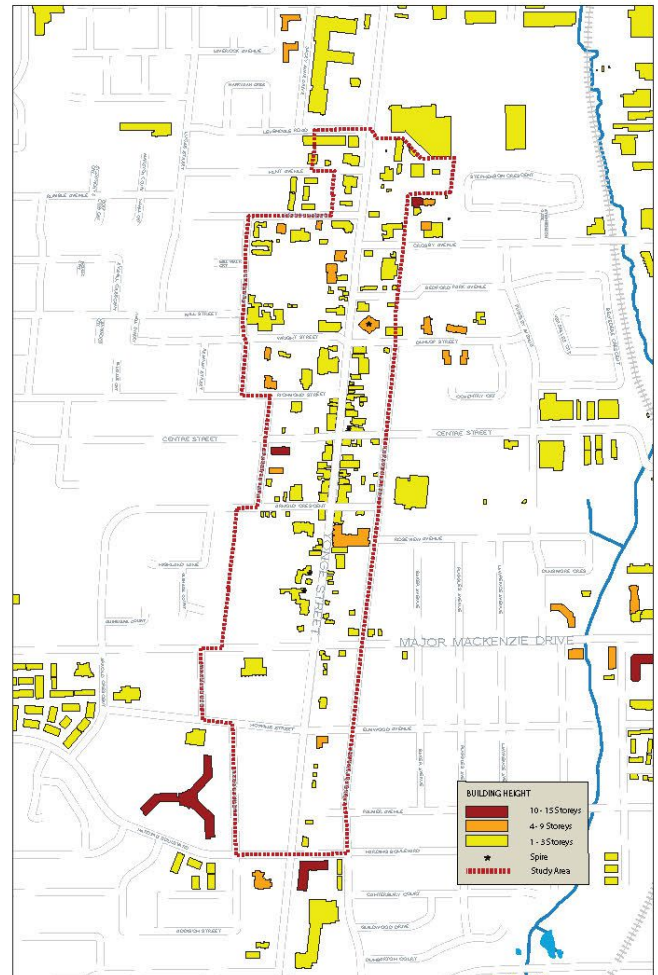
Heritage/Church Spires

- Four existing church spires contribute to the unique character and identity of Downtown Richmond Hill.
 - St. Mary's Anglican Church
 - Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church
 - Richmond Hill United Church
 - S. Mary's Immaculate Church
- There is a concentration of buildings of architectural and historical significance along Yonge Street in the commercial core area and along Church Street in the historic residential area.
- Heritage buildings have a consistent scale and relationship to the street.
- There are opportunities to identify and designate additional buildings of architectural and historical significance



Building Heights

- 3 categories of building heights were identified
 - 1-3 Storeys (low-rise)
 - 4-9 Storeys (mid-rise)
 - 10-15 storeys (high-rise)
- Most buildings are 1-3 storeys.
- Only a handful of buildings are mid-rise and high-rise and are dispersed throughout the study area.

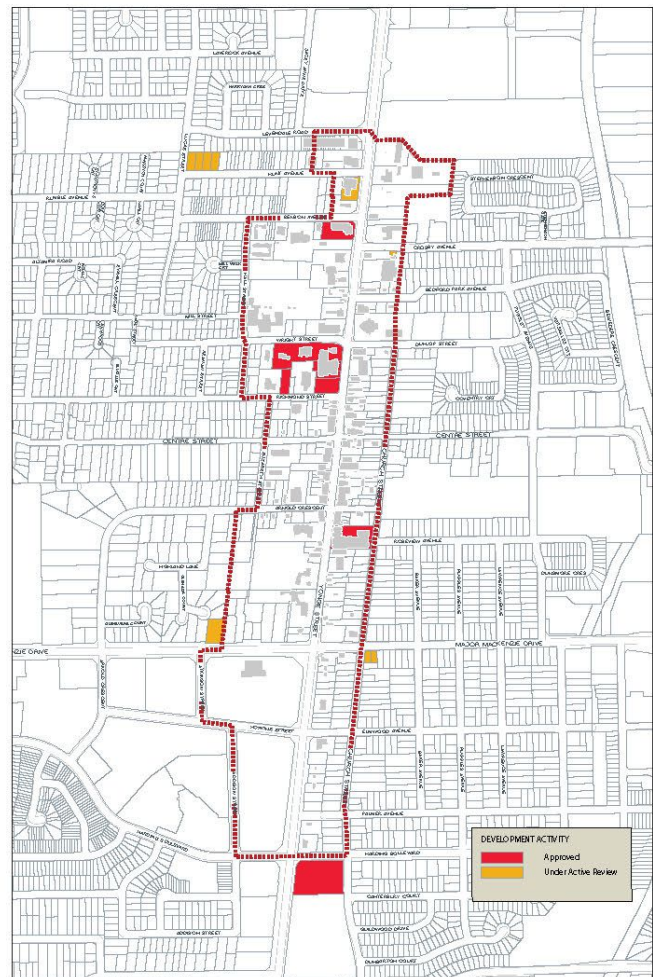
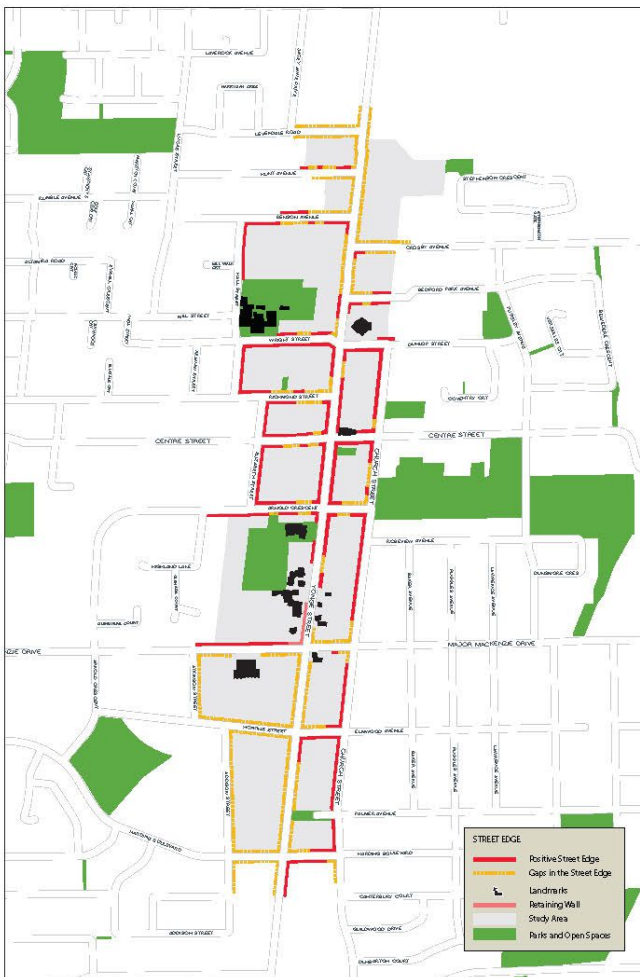


Street Edge

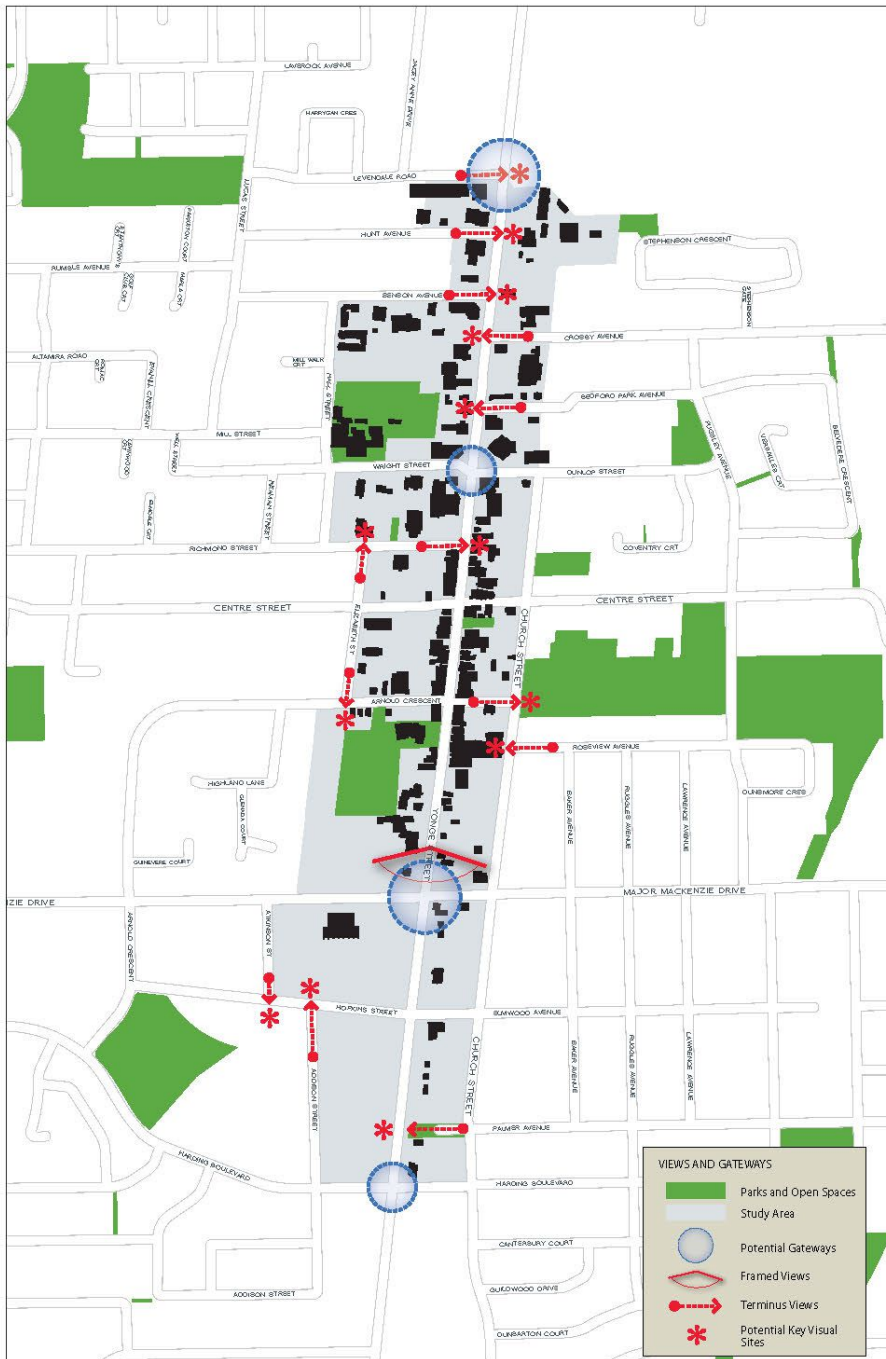
- There is a consistent positive street edge - buildings oriented and placed close to the street - along Yonge Street between Major Mackenzie Drive and Wright/ Dunlop Streets.
- Significant 'gaps' in the street edge exist south of Major Mackenzie Drive and north of Wright/ Dunlop Street, where automobile oriented uses are predominate. These 'gaps' present an opportunity to improve the streetscape and the quality of the pedestrian experience through infill development and public realm enhancements.
- Church Street is well framed with a consistent street edge, but opportunities exist to fill in the 'gaps' on the west side of the street.

Development Activity

- There are 4 significant developments that have been approved within the study area, including the new Centre for the Performing Arts and 10091-10101 Yonge Street (Tridel). This infill can enhance the pedestrian experience by filling in the 'gaps' along the street with buildings that are appropriately scaled, helping animate the downtown with new retail uses and a robust residential population.
- There are 4 development applications currently under review, with 2 of them located immediately outside the study area boundaries.



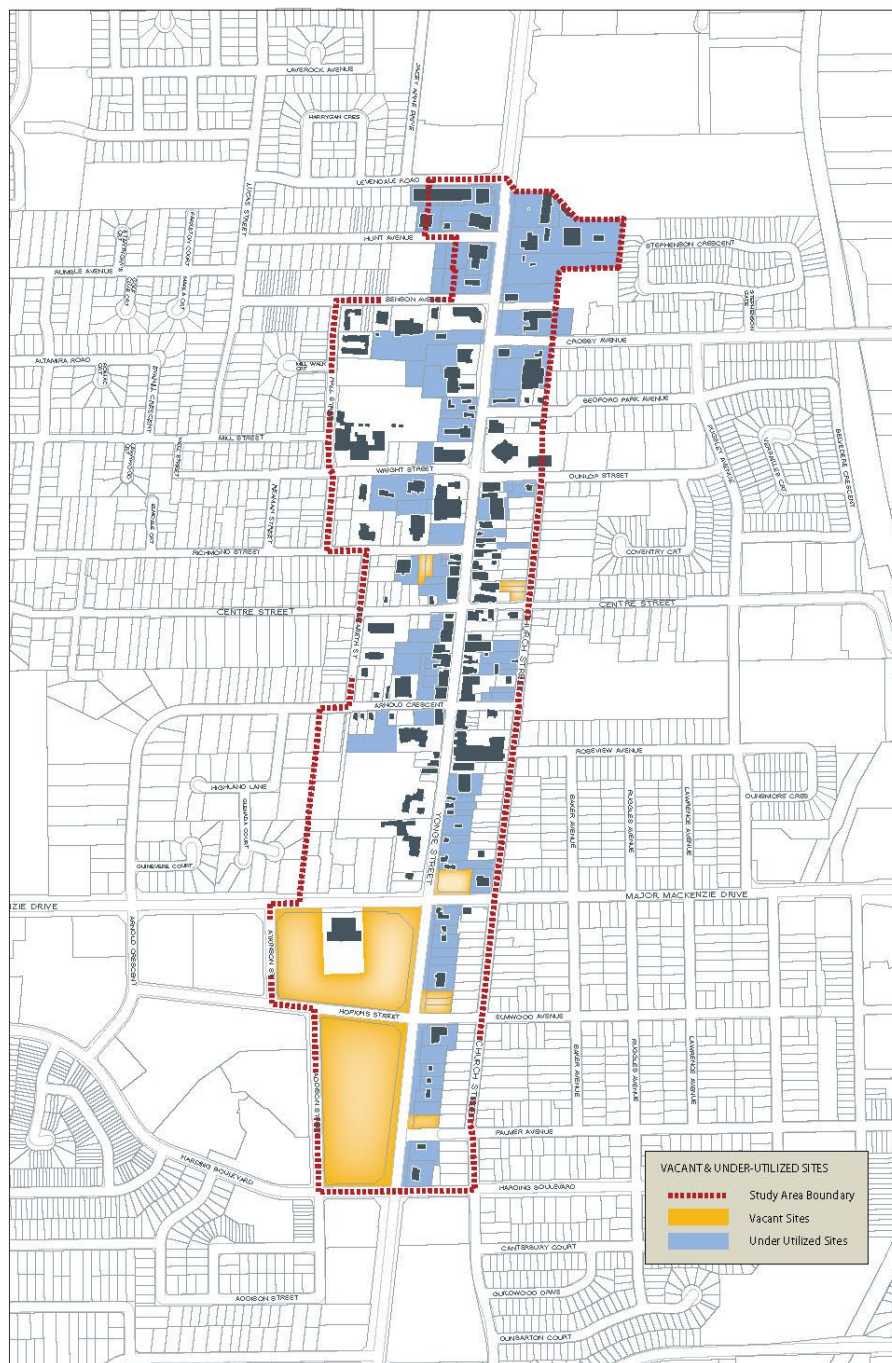
Views and Gateways



- A Terminus View is a view corridor (often streets or open spaces) that terminates at key potential visual sites. The staggered local and collector street network feeding onto Yonge Street provides for many terminating views to downtown. Key Visual Sites are located at the end of these views. These strategic sites require special consideration as they can enhance the Downtown's presence and orient visitors.
- Existing views of the church spires contribute to the unique character and identity of Downtown Richmond Hill.
- Topography provides views southwards that are unique, in Richmond Hill, to the Downtown. This has been identified as a "Framed View."
- 4 potential gateways have been identified. These gateway areas provide an opportunity to define the point of entry into Downtown Richmond Hill and provide a focal point for the community through open space features and design of the built form. The treatment of corners within potential gateways is important to enhancing orientation and civic presence.

Vacant or Under-utilized sites

- A number of vacant sites exist, especially south of Major Mackenzie Drive.
- Under-utilized sites are those with under-developed commercial or office related uses, and/or surface parking.
- A number of sites that have the potential for significant re-development have been identified north of Benson Avenue and Crosby Avenue. These are currently automobile oriented uses with large surface parking areas.
- There are also potential re-development opportunities at the rear of the buildings fronting onto Yonge Street.
- Vacant and under-utilized sites provide an opportunity to fill in the 'gaps', add density, and contribute to an improved streetscape.



20 Key Directions from the Analysis of Existing Conditions:

- Design Yonge Street as a main street focus for pedestrians and a regional connection for transit and cars: think regional connection with a pause.
- Maintain a street network that ensures choice of routes and access from neighbourhoods to support the main street area.
- Larger lots at the north and south end of the study area present particular opportunities for intensification
- Provide a sensitive transition to adjacent residential neighbourhood - sideyards, backyards.
- Define a hierarchy of responses at the 6 streets that cross Yonge Street.
- Examine scenarios for intensification on the diverse range of lot sizes and configurations found Downtown
- Connect existing open space and provide new types of urban open space downtown.
- Provide a safe, convenient and connected pedestrian and cycling network.
- Incorporate urban open space to define gateways
- Fill in the gaps in the street edge.
- Extend the defined street edge condition north and south from the Centre Street core to create an appealing pedestrian environment throughout downtown.
- Consider varying the building setback to create maintain the diversity on Yonge Street and to create special pedestrian places.
- Larger sites at the north and south end of the study area may be appropriate for higher density intensification, particularly at the transit stops
- Protect adjacent stable residential neighbourhoods.
- Develop the strategy for parking with the strategy for intensification
- Consider the key visual sites as strategic locations that can enhance the character of downtown.
- Plan for intensification that maintains the views of the spires. Churches should remain prominent landmarks.
- McConaghy Centre should also remain a prominent landmark, civic space, and special place along the street.

- Plan for intensification that maintains the historic grain of built form - variety and diversity of form will be important.
- Plan for the rhythm of facades - windows, doors, stoops, display spaces, lanes the point of entry to downtown and a focal point for the community: north and south limits and Major MacKenzie...as a starting point.



Lessons from other Downtowns

Key directions learned from other Downtowns:

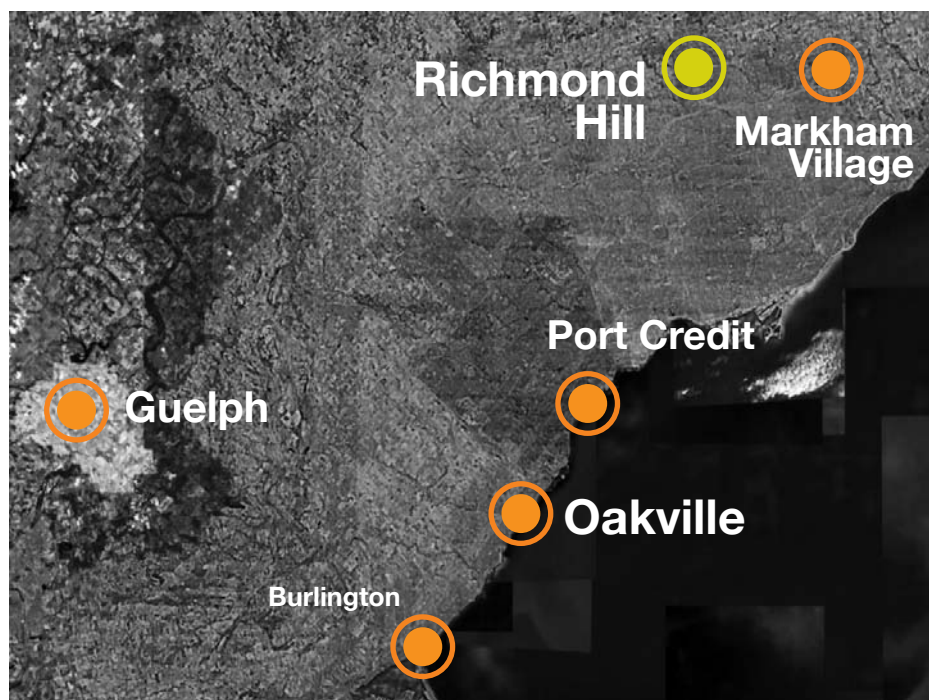
- 1 Reinforce and leverage Downtown's identifiable and distinct sense of place.
- 2 Support the plans for higher order transit with intensified development at transit stations and stops.
- 3 Maintain a fine grained street and block pattern to ensure ease of movement through downtown.
- 4 Build a great public realm - streetscapes, urban squares and parks.
- 5 Enhance the civic presence Downtown with additional public facilities.
- 6 Develop a parking strategy in concert with the strategy for intensification.
- 7 Concentrate the retail.
- 8 Protect the stable residential neighbourhoods within walking distance of Downtown.

Why look to other communities for inspiration? Many other Ontario downtowns face similar challenges to Richmond Hill, including heritage preservation, transition in urban form, management of traffic, perceived lack of parking and demand for urban public spaces. Additionally, a number of GTA municipalities have needed to reinvent their downtowns in the face of commercial competition from shopping mall and large format retail centres.

The following case studies present some examples of successful programs that have contributed to the revitalized of other Ontario downtowns. They have been selected because of their similarities with Richmond Hill. The criteria for their selection are as follows:

- A "Main Street" condition;
- Significant heritage inventory
- Location along a major arterial; and,
- Similar scale and function.

Some, but not all the downtowns examined meet all 4 conditions. Each case study provides examples of strategies that can provide valuable lessons for Downtown Richmond Hill.



Downtown Burlington

The decline of Burlington's port and its dramatic increase in population challenged the role of the downtown. Burlington engaged in a consultation process that resulted in a vision for a more urban zone, featuring offices and condominiums, and oriented toward recreational facilities on the lake. In contrast to other communities that opted to maintain more traditional typologies, Burlington has combined historic buildings with taller, more modern typologies, in order to increase the downtown population.

Initiatives

- Encouraged dense retail, office and condo developments on main streets, stepping down to surrounding residential neighbourhoods.
- Located government facilities downtown.
- Instituted downtown urban design guidelines.
- Provided a public link to the nearby waterfront; landscaped the 15.7-acre regional park; and created a public square.
- Developed a comprehensive public festival and events strategy to attract people to public spaces year-round.
- Conducted a summit, series of town hall meetings and public opinion survey to develop vision for downtown.
- Drew connections to nearby attractions, including Burlington Art Centre, Joseph Brant Museum and Burlington Beach.
- Currently working to establish campus of McMaster University in downtown.

Conclusions

Now designated as an Urban Growth Node, downtown Burlington has seen significant new construction in recent years. Amenities such as parks, historic buildings and cultural facilities have drawn an affluent new class of residents living in higher density developments.



Similarities to Downtown Richmond Hill:

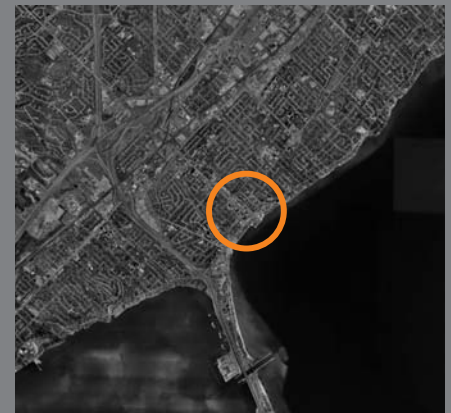
- Historic downtown commercial district
- Located in a growing municipality
- Centred at the intersection of two major arterials (Brock Avenue and Lakeshore Boulevard)
- Similar in population size to downtown Richmond Hill

Population

- 165,000

Major developments

- McMaster University campus (approved for completion in 2010)
- Elizabeth Street Penthouses, six-storey condominiums (2008)
- 360 on Pearl St., 17-storey mixed-use condominium building (2008)



Downtown Guelph

Similarities to Downtown
Richmond Hill:

- Downtown commercial district
- Many heritage buildings
- iconic church spire

Population

- 125,000

Major developments

- The Baker Street Redevelopment, one of downtown's largest developments ever, includes both public and private investment, and will produce a central library, a new city hall, a parking garage, and residential and retail units (2008)
- Old Quebec Street, a shopping mall and office complex built on a greyfield site (the old Guelph Eaton Centre), using historic décor and materials (2003).
- Sleeman Centre, a minor league hockey arena and concert venue (2000)



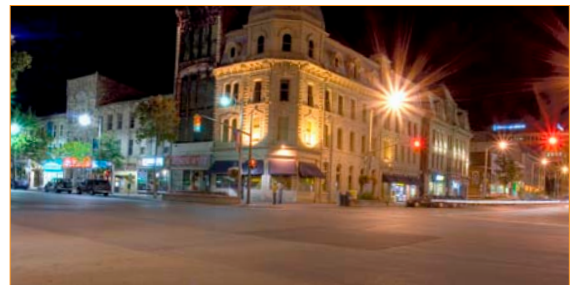
Guelph is known for its successful downtown core, featuring many heritage buildings and large farmers' market. Following a period of sprawl and decline, Guelph has seen numerous initiatives over the past two decades aimed at improving environmental and heritage conditions.

Initiatives

- Instituted grants program to assist property owners in building new residential developments downtown.
- Enhanced civic spaces and constructed new signage.
- Design guidelines for downtown, to ensure that new structures do not conflict with historic buildings and that views of the Church of Our Lady Immaculate (Guelph's most iconic church) are unobstructed.
- Currently developing new downtown plan, which will potentially see narrowing of streets, creation of permanent pedestrian malls, new landscaping and replacement of strip malls with denser, mixed-use development.

Conclusions

Ahead of its time in many ways, Guelph has turned its downtown into the true centre of its city, for community events, as well as upscale shopping and restaurants. Quality new commercial developments and fine streetscaping have produced a historic, but also bustling and contemporary feel in the core.



Main Street, Markham

Main Street is one of Markham's two historic commercial districts. Since developing a master plan for Main Street in 2000, Markham has been working to improve the conditions for pedestrians, to accentuate the area's historic character and add infill.

Initiatives

- Started Pedestrian Days, when Main Street becomes a pedestrian mall.
- Introduced traffic calming features
- Introduced streetscape guidelines in 2001.
- Improved streetscaping, including adding decorative lighting, furniture, plantings and signage.
- Burying hydro lines.
- Currently developing a public square, as proposed in the Main Street Markham Master Plan of 2000. The square will be adjacent to the Old Town Hall at Main St. and Robinson.
- Intention to reduce traffic on Main St. by creating bypass for trucks, and narrowing road to two lanes.

Conclusions

Markham is still in the process of fulfilling the goals set out for Main Street in the master plan. However, they appear to be moving toward a vision of a more pedestrian friendly retail area that serves local and specialty needs.

Similarities to Downtown Richmond Hill:

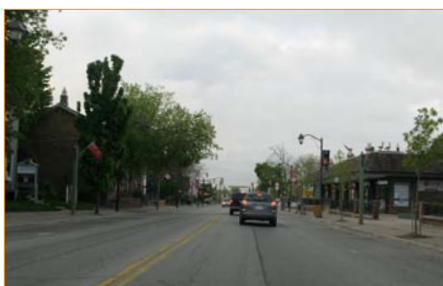
- Historic downtown commercial district
- Located in York Region
- Centred at the intersection of two major arterials (Main St/ Highway 48 and Highway 7)

Population

- 260,000

Major Developments

- Old Town Hall block development on existing parking lot, including a new public square and an outdoor skating rink, plus mixed-use buildings that will include restaurant, retail and residential uses. Proposed building heights are 3-4 and 4-5 storeys (2008).
- Historic train station refurbished and reopened for use by GO Transit (2001).



Downtown Oakville

Similarities to Downtown Richmond Hill:

- Downtown commercial district
- Located in a growing municipality
- Many heritage buildings
- Similar population size to Richmond Hill

Population

- 165,000

Major Developments

- One Eleven Forsythe – 13 storey residential building on the western edge of Downtown Oakville.

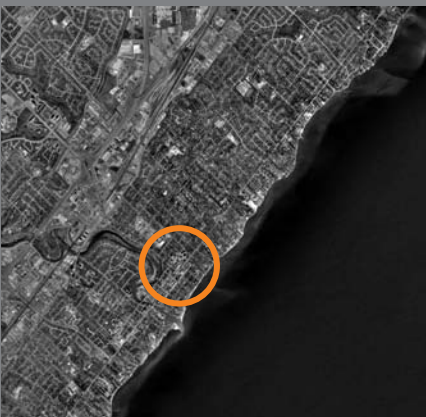
Old Oakville is one of three commercial districts in Oakville, along with Bronte Road and Kerr Street (immediately beside Old Oakville). It has become one of the 905 region's leading upscale suburban shopping districts. Central Old Oakville has remained primarily low-rise and retail-oriented, book-ended by more significant developments, and has leveraged its historic character to promote it as a destination for affluent consumers

Initiatives

- Instituted design (1984) and infill (2000) guidelines to ensure new developments enhance pedestrian realm and create public spaces.
- Used streetscape guidelines and site plan control to promote healthy development. Lakeshore Road and Robinson Street were given new decorative street lighting, furniture and paving, as well as trees and flowers
- Encouraged development of commercial-recreation and entertainment facilities.
- Designated residential areas adjacent to downtown as Heritage Conservation Districts.
- Developed Oakville Towne Square, a space for public events and passive recreation. Specific happenings held there include fundraisers, bazaars, cooking events, outdoor film screenings and a town Christmas tree.
- BIA initiated parking token program, which offers \$1 off public parking for customers.

Conclusions

Downtown Oakville is an example of a successful central business district revitalization that has become both a gathering place and a shopping destination. Streetscaping seems to have played a major role in enhancing its historic charm.



Port Credit, Mississauga

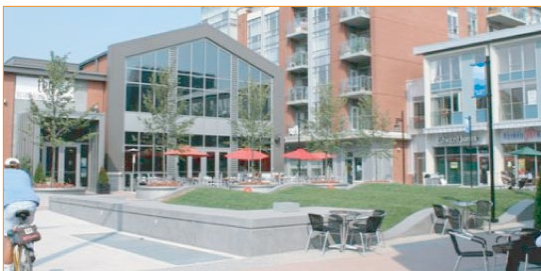
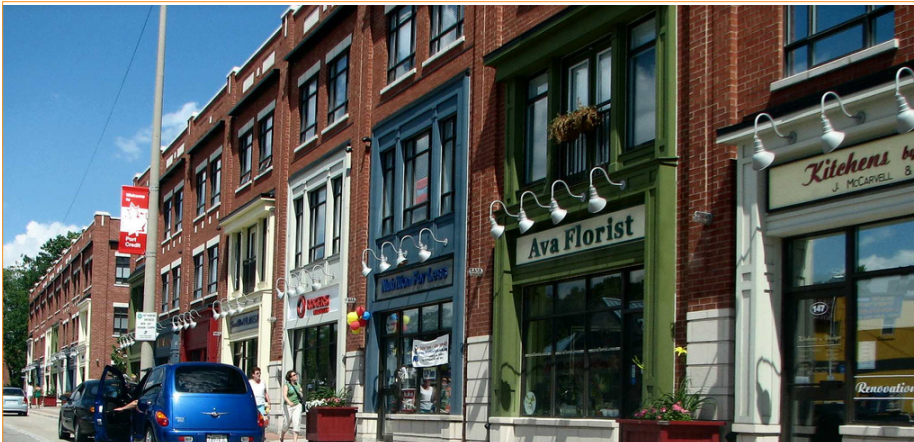
Amalgamated into the City of Mississauga in 1974, Port Credit had a history as an industrial and shipping centre, as well as a destination for water recreation. Since the closing of most of its industrial sites, the community has developed itself as an upscale residential area and retail destination. It now has 64 restaurants, and is one of the leading dining destinations in the 905 region.

Initiatives

- Continuing to add mixed-use infill and intensification on underutilized or brownfield sites
- Provided property owners with information, suggestions and examples for alterations and additions, in order to preserve historic styles.
- Added historic plaques and displays to educate residents about heritage.
- Constructed underground parking to allow for denser, more urban appearance at grade.
- Studying feasibility of heritage conservation district.

Conclusions

Port Credit was historically a small community, in terms of residential and commercial scale. The renewal process the community has undergone over the past decade has intensified the area, and may provide a good example of how to grow a traditional retail district, while maintaining its character. Currently there appears to be some contention on whether Port Credit will allow denser, taller buildings or pursue a more historic low-rise form.



Similarities to Downtown Richmond Hill:

- Downtown commercial district (core of former Port Credit municipality)
- Located in a growing municipality
- Centred at the intersection of two major arterials (Huronario Street/ Hwy.10 and Lakeshore Boulevard)

Population

- 700,000 (Port Credit's population is approximately 10,000)

Major developments

- Innovative live-work townhouses on Lakeshore Blvd. at former St. Lawrence Starch factory site, creating a traditional downtown area (1999).
- The North Shore – a 22-storey residential building with grade related commercial uses.



Next Steps

- Conduct the Downtown Forum to collaborate with stakeholders to develop the framework for the land use and design strategy.
- Following the Downtown Forum, refine the strateg , and address:
 - Character and identify;
 - Heritage;
 - Land use and built form;
 - Public realm: streetscape, parks, squares;
 - Connections: pedestrians, transit, roads; and,
 - Parking.
- Prepare an implementation strategy, including: incentives, management of the Downtown and heritage resources, policy, zoning, development standards.
- Prepare a draft recommendations report.
- Conduct a final Downtown Forum in September 2008