

Recommendations Report

Richmond Hill Downtown Design & Land Use Strategy

May 2009



Recommendations Report

Richmond Hill Downtown Design & Land Use Strategy

May 2009

Prepared for: **The Town of Richmond Hill**

Prepared by: **The Planning Partnership**
in association with
Poulos & Chung &
E.R.A. Architects

i. Executive Summary

The Richmond Hill Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy is one of two “area studies” being undertaken as part of the development of the Town’s new Official Plan, which is being prepared concurrently with the new Strategic Plan. The Downtown Strategy Recommendations Report addresses all of the goals outlined in the new Strategic Plan approved by Council on April 27, 2009.

The Downtown Strategy was completed in three phases over nine months. It was prepared in the context of collaboration with the community and centred on three events: a Downtown Summit and two Downtown Forums.

Through consultation, the team heard that residents value the Downtown as the heart of Richmond Hill. To continue to be the heart of the town, a new vision is proposed that builds on the area’s inherent characteristics and strengths:

Downtown is the historic, symbolic, cultural, and civic heart of Richmond Hill. Downtown will continue to be a pedestrian-oriented, compact and mixed use centre that is enhanced by a high quality public realm, vibrant and animated urban environments and the highest quality of building design. Heritage structures will be integrated with the context of new development.

Three principles reflect the values of the community, the inherent characteristics and qualities of the area, and Provincial and Regional policy directions. The principles set the framework within which the key directions for land use, urban design, public realm, and circulation are determined, guiding the transformation of the Downtown area:

1. Protect the character and qualities of the Downtown;
2. Promote the identity of Downtown as a mixed use, transit-supportive, sustainable centre;
3. Enhance Downtown’s character defining elements.

The Richmond Hill Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy provides a framework for shaping the role, function and character of Downtown Richmond Hill. The Strategy is comprised of four components:

- Land Use and Urban Design Framework;
- Public Realm Framework;
- Circulation; and,
- Implementation.

The Land Use and Urban Design Framework sets the direction for establishing Downtown Richmond Hill as a vibrant and diverse environment with more residents living within easy walking distance to support retail and commercial activity on Yonge Street. The Strategy fosters the character and identity of three distinct Districts: the Uptown District (north of Wright/Dunlop Street to Levedale Boulevard), the Village District (south of Wright/Dunlop Street to Major Mackenzie Drive), and the Civic Centre District (south of Major Mackenzie Drive to Harding Boulevard). Each District has its own character that sets the context for land use and built form improvements that build on unique existing conditions, and opportunities. The greatest heights and densities are assigned to the Uptown and Civic Districts which have many vacant and under-used sites that could be available for taller buildings. This enables the primarily low rise, heritage character of the Village District to be protected, while accommodating growth. Careful location of buildings will also ensure that views to the church spires are protected. Concentrating density north and south of the Village District will support the proposed bus rapid transit stations. The Demonstration Plan depicts all buildings in Downtown Richmond

Hill as street related, with a relatively consistent and contiguous street edge. Taller buildings will be designed to ensure a comfortable pedestrian experience on the sidewalk with a base building of up to three storeys in the Village District and up to six storeys in the Uptown and Civic Districts. Key urban design considerations provide direction for the detailed design of buildings with respect to orientation and placement, street wall, corner sites, materials, environmental design/sustainable development, adjacency to heritage buildings and signage.

The Public Realm Framework establishes a legible, coherent and appealing physical environment by identifying and coordinating aspects of the public realm for improvement. Three urban squares, green spaces in the front of the four churches, and five parks and new parkettes associated with high density private development provide a series of public gathering spaces at regular intervals along Yonge Street. New Downtown and Village Gateways will mark the entry to Downtown Richmond Hill and the Village District. Gateways and sites that mark the terminus of views will enhance the sense of place and orientation in Downtown Richmond Hill. Existing parking and loading areas at the rear of buildings fronting Yonge Street in the Village District present an opportunity to create courtyards in association with infill development. Landscaped courtyards with special paving could maintain a function for parking and provide areas for patios and outdoor space. Over time, the connected courtyards could provide an informal continuous pedestrian oriented laneway system. Through redevelopment on Yonge Street in the Village District, buildings could be modestly set back to create pedestrian mews. The Public Realm Framework also provides direction for streetscape treatment in Downtown Richmond Hill to create appealing public spaces that connect urban squares, parks and parkettes.

The framework for Circulation addresses cycling and pedestrian connections, transit, parking and servicing. Downtown is well served with sidewalks, albeit some are narrow through the Village District. Wider sidewalks in the Uptown and Civic Districts as part of redevelopment, mid-block pedestrian connections and a connected system of courtyards and pedestrian mews will enhance pedestrian circulation. Bike lanes and amenities such as racks, will encourage cycling Downtown. Two bus rapid transit stations are planned for Downtown Richmond Hill – one just south of Major Mackenzie and one at Wright/Dunlop Street. Most of the study area is within a five minute walk of these stations. The valuable role parking plays in a strong downtown is not questioned, but this Strategy advocates that parking be planned, designed and located to create a diverse, thriving, pedestrian friendly area. It is critical to balance the supply of parking in concert with redevelopment through a comprehensive approach to planning and urban design. Downtown requires a special approach to the provision of parking that, while meeting the needs of motorists, sustains and enhances the vision for Downtown Richmond Hill.

The final component of the Strategy, Implementation, sets out 20 priority actions with respect to policy, capital projects, detailed studies and governance. The general intent, permitted and prohibited uses, height and setbacks anticipated for each of the land use designations are summarized to provide guidance for preparing a new Downtown Secondary Plan as part of the development of the Town's new Official Plan.

ii. Acknowledgements

The Richmond Hill Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy is the result of a collaborative process where all those with an interest in the project were invited to work with the consulting/town staff team at the Downtown Forums. The team truly appreciated the time people took away from their busy lives to participate in the project. Be assured that we listened carefully to all of views expressed.

The consulting team greatly valued the input received from the Town's Core Team who worked very closely with the consultants through each phase of the project. The Town's Core Team was:

Paul Freeman, Manager of Policy
Joanne Leung, Manager of Urban Design
Michelle Dobbie, Planner II (Policy)

In addition, the team was assisted by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) who provided critical input on the work in progress at key points in the project. TAC members included:

Town of Richmond Hill Planning and Strategic Initiatives

Ana Bassios, Commissioner of Planning and Development
Gwen Manderson, Director of Strategic Initiatives
Kelvin Kwan, Director of Development
Lise Conde, Project Manager
Maria Flores, Senior Planner (Policy)
Sal Aiello, Manager of Subdivisions

Town of Richmond Hill Heritage

Mark Krapez, Heritage/Urban Design Planner

Town of Richmond Hill, Parks

Audrey Hollasch, Director of Parks Development and Design
Tracey Steele, Manager of Parks Planning and Natural Heritage

Town of Richmond Hill, Transportation

Eugene Zawadowsky, Director of Transportation, Environmental, and Development Engineering
Marcel Lanteigne, Manager of Transportation, Traffic, and Site Plans
Steve Fick, Director of Design, Construction, and Water Resources

Region of York

Heather Konefat, Director of Community Planning
Augustine Ko, Senior Planner - Community Planning
Sean Hertel, Senior Planner – Centres, Corridors and Subways

VIVA/YRT Staff

Rosa Ruffolo, Service Planner, YRT
Sabbir Saiyed, Service Planner, YRT
David Clark, Chief Architect, VIVA

The consulting team was:

The Planning Partnership

Donna Hinde, Project Manager
Harold Madi, Urban Designer
Rick Merrill, Urban Designer
Ron Palmer, Policy Planner
David Leinster, Landscape Architect
Vince Tong, Planner and Project Coordinator (including graphics and report production)
Ana Isabel Aulestia, Urban Designer
Eric Stewart, Landscape Designer

Poulos & Chung

Nic Poulos, Advisor, Transportation, Transit and Parking

ERA Architects

Kirsten Stein, Advisor, Heritage
Matthew Somerville, Advisor, Heritage

Table of Contents

i. Executive Summary	-	3.0 Public Realm Framework	45
ii. Acknowledgements	-	3.1 Urban Squares, Church Greens, Parks and Parkettes	48
1.0 Introduction	1	3.2 Gateways and Landmarks	52
1.1 Context	3	3.3 Courtyards and Mews	54
1.2 Study Approach	4	3.4 Streetscape Hierarchy	57
1.3 Planning Framework	5	Yonge Street	58
1.4 Vision	6	Major MacKenzie Drive	61
1.5 Principles	7	Transition Streets	62
1.6 Report Organization	8	Interface Streets	63
2.0 Land Use and Urban Design Framework	9	4.0 Circulation	65
2.1 Land Use	12	4.1 Pedestrian and Cycling Connections	68
2.2 Heritage	14	4.2 Public Transit	70
2.3 Height and Density	16	4.3 Parking and Servicing	72
2.4 Built Form	18	5.0 Implementation	75
Uptown District	20	5.1 Suggested Framework of the Land Use Designations	80
Village District	24		
Civic District	28		
Urban Design Considerations	32		
Building Types	36		
Demonstration Sites	38		



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

1.0 Introduction

The Town of Richmond Hill initiated the People Plan process in October 2007 to concurrently develop a new Strategic Plan and Official Plan. Over the next two years, the people of Richmond Hill will work with Town Council and staff through the People Plan consultation process to develop the vision for the future. A number of background studies are being prepared for the Official Plan, which include priority area studies for the Regional Centre and the Downtown areas. The Richmond Hill Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy is one of the priority area studies being completed.

With the initiation of the new Strategic Plan and Official Plan, Richmond Hill is on the cusp of an exciting era of town planning 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, no other place in Richmond Hill is better positioned to benefit from this shift as the Downtown.

The Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy is intended to guide development and investment by providing:

- a vision for the future Downtown to inform and be consistent with the Town's new Strategic Plan and 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.

This Strategy is comprised of two documents:

- **Background Report:** a summary of the input received from the consultation events, provincial, regional and municipal policy context, relevant special studies, the socio-economic context, the analysis of existing conditions (land use, circulation and built form) and lessons learned from other downtowns.
- **Recommendations Report:** a description of the recommended land use, built form, public realm and circulation frameworks and recommendations for policy, programs and future studies.

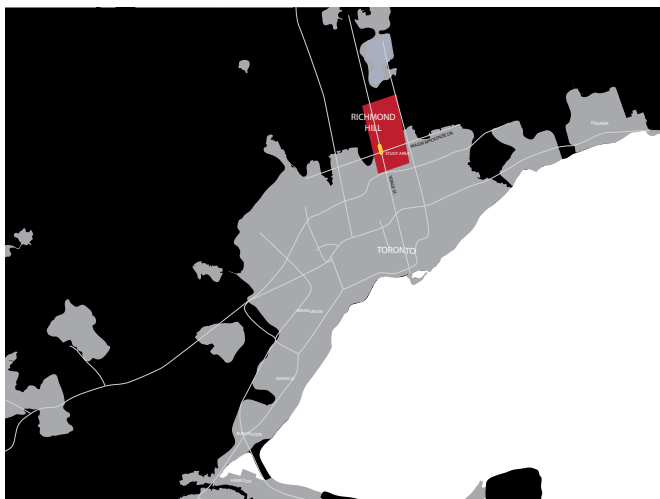
1.1 Context

Downtown Richmond Hill is centrally located in the urbanized area of the municipality. The boundaries for this study are Harding Boulevard in the south and Levendale Road in the north. It includes properties on both sides of Yonge Street. The Study Area has approximately 4,000m of street frontage and covers about 50ha.

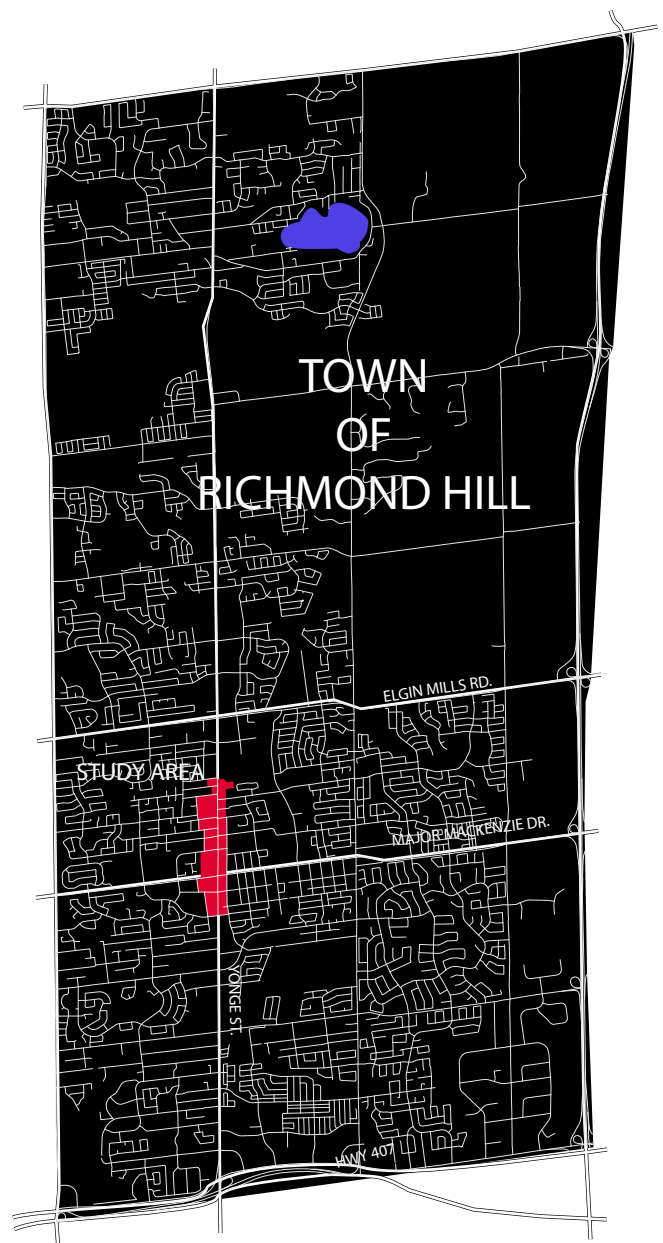
The recently completed Socio-Economic Study, required as background for the Strategic Plan and Official Plan, finds that Richmond Hill has a diverse and changing population in terms of cultures, languages and faiths. This population is highly educated, affluent and rapidly growing. Richmond Hill has a high proportion of large households, and is culturally made up of many visible minorities. Residents 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 municipalities.

In the next 25 years, Richmond Hill will continue to grow, although it will be driven by growth in the number of seniors, as the youth population plateaus. The town will become increasingly diverse, as well as increasingly affluent, with an expected rise in household income. Factors influencing the economic profile include lowering labour participation rates and declining manufacturing jobs. There will also be a growing housing affordability gap. Transit commitments will facilitate the expansion of business services and complement other sectors within the Town.

A future challenge for Richmond Hill will be the lack of developable lands compared to the expected influx of potential residents. As a result, development patterns in Richmond Hill will change to a more compact form.



Richmond Hill within the Greater Golden Horseshoe



Downtown within the town of Richmond Hill

1.2 Study Approach



Public Consultation - Workshops

This study was completed in three phases over nine months:

Phase 1 involved background information gathering and analysis of existing conditions and the planning policy framework. This reconnaissance is summarized in the Background Report. The first phase also included an introductory working session with a group of stakeholders in the context of a summit held in early May, 2008.

Phase 2 involved the development of the preliminary framework for the Strategy through a visioning and design charrette held in June, 2008. A third consultation event was held in October to present the draft Strategy.

Phase 3 included the preparation and presentation of the Recommendations Report.

The Richmond Hill Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy was prepared in the context of collaboration with the community and centred on three events. The Background Report provides a complete summary of the input received during each event.

The **Downtown Summit** (May 6, 2008) was intended for a small group of representatives, including those from ratepayer and heritage associations, landowners, developers and downtown businesses. This was intended to introduce the team to some of the key interests and concerns, in order to shape the agenda for the Downtown Forum. The discussion focused on the identification of strengths, opportunities, and issues, and culminated with a discussion of possible solutions for addressing the issues identified.

The first **Downtown Forum** (June 10 – 12, 2008) was a multi day visioning and design charrette during which the consulting team set up a temporary design studio in the Elgin Barrow Arena to develop the framework of the land use and design concept. During the Forum, there were sequential working sessions with various groups, informal drop-in times and evening public presentations for participants to review work in progress.

The second **Downtown Forum** (October 1, 2008) was a presentation of the preliminary recommendations for the Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy. This very well attended meeting in the Elgin Barrow Arena began with a presentation and ended with table group discussions, during which input was received on the preliminary recommendations.

1.3 Planning Framework

The Richmond Hill Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy responds to direction provided by provincial and regional planning policy. The Background Report describes the planning context with summaries of key directions from the Province and Region.

The **Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)** went into effect on March 1, 2005. The PPS puts forward a vision for Ontario's land use planning system that focuses growth in settlement areas such as Downtown Richmond Hill. It directs planning authorities, such as the Town of Richmond Hill and the Region of York, to integrate transportation and land use and to support plans for transit. The municipality is directed by the PPS to:

- focus growth and promote vitality and regeneration;
- plan for densities and a mix of land uses that 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; and,
- establish and implement phasing policies to ensure targets are achieved and development is orderly.

The **Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Growth Plan)** came into effect on June 16, 2006. The intent of the Growth Plan is to promote “complete communities”- places 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 services to meet daily needs. The Growth Plan identifies Downtown Richmond Hill as a built-up area. The Province directs new growth to built-up areas through intensification of mixed use, transit supportive, pedestrian friendly urban environments. Yonge Street is identified as an intensification corridor where higher density, mixed use development is directed to support high order transit. By 2015, 40% of all residential development is to be within the built-up areas. Intensification targets are to be established in the Official Plan.

The **York Region Official Plan (ROP)** was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 1994. The ROP identifies Downtown Richmond Hill as an Urban Area.

Yonge Street is a Regional Corridor planned for rapid transit, while Major MacKenzie Drive is planned for regional transit. The Region's objective for Local Centres is to provide a concentration of residential, business, institutional and service activities for the surrounding community. The objective for a Regional Corridor is to achieve attractive and vibrant development to support public transit and link Regional Centres. The Region supports identifying the conditions of each Regional Corridor, as will occur through this Strategy. The identification of Key Development Areas that have the greatest opportunity for compact and mixed use development is directed by the Region. These areas should support an overall long term density target of 2.5 FSI (Floor Space Index).

The Region is targeting a minimum 40% population increase to its Urban Areas, towns and villages.

1.4 Vision

The Design and Land Use Strategy provides a framework for shaping the role, function and character of Downtown Richmond Hill. The vision was developed in the context of the Downtown Summit and the Downtown Forums. It builds on the area's inherent assets and strengths. The vision is broad in scope, so that it will remain relevant for many years as a useful tool to guide subsequent initiatives for Downtown Richmond Hill.

vision statement

Downtown is the historic, symbolic, cultural and civic heart of Richmond Hill. Downtown will continue to be a pedestrian-oriented, compact and mixed use centre that is enhanced by a high quality public realm, vibrant and animated urban environments and the highest quality of building design. Heritage structures will be integrated with the context of new development.

1.5 Principles



The principles for the Design and Land Use Strategy are based on three themes that reflect the values of the community, the inherent characteristics and qualities of the area, and key Provincial and Regional policy directions. They will help to shape the Strategy and will guide the transformation of Downtown Richmond Hill.

Protect

Downtown Richmond Hill is recognized for its special character. This was one of the top themes discussed during the extensive consultation undertaken for the Strategic Plan. A core principle of the Strategy is to protect:

- the “Village” character;
- buildings of historic or architectural quality;
- the character of adjacent residential neighbourhoods;
- the pedestrian scale of village sidewalks;
- views to church spires and other landmarks; and,
- mature trees.



Promote

Provincial and Regional policy directs growth to centres such as Downtown Richmond Hill. A core principle of the Strategy is to promote:

- intensification to support transit;
- mixed use development;
- the prominence of heritage buildings in the Village Core;
- architecture that is of its time;
- urban public spaces;
- the identity of Downtown as a destination;
- the economic vitality of Downtown; and,
- sustainable development.



Enhance

The analysis of existing conditions and community consultation revealed several opportunities to enhance Downtown’s character-defining elements. A core principle of the Strategy is to enhance:

- courtyards, mews, lanes;
- public spaces;
- streetscapes;
- pedestrian connections;
- transition to adjacent neighbourhoods;
- sustainability;
- public art; and,
- signage.

1.6 Report Organization

Land Use and Urban Design Framework

The Land Use and Urban Design Framework begins by describing the three distinct districts in the Study Area. It then sets out the overall strategy for land use, heritage, height and built form. In describing built form, the section includes a description of urban design considerations, building types and demonstration sites.

Public Realm Framework

The Public Realm Framework provides recommendations for civic squares, parkettes, church greens, gateways, landmarks, courtyards and mews. In addition, the streetscape treatment for Yonge Street, Major Mackenzie Drive, transition streets and the interface streets is described.

Circulation

The Framework for circulation describes recommendations with respect to pedestrian and cycling connections, public transit, parking and servicing.

Implementation

The Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy will inform the development of the new Official Plan. Town Staff will prepare the Downtown Secondary Plan in conjunction with the new Official Plan, followed by a Downtown Zoning By-law based on the Downtown Design and Land Use Strategy. This report provides recommendations on priority actions and the parameters for the suggested land use designations.



Land Use and Urban Design Framework

2.0 Land Use and Urban Design Framework



Existing Conditions - Uptown District



Existing Conditions - Uptown District



Existing Conditions - Village District



Existing Conditions - Village District



Existing Conditions - Civic District

The Land Use and Urban Design Framework guides development with respect to land use, heritage features, height, density and the built form. Downtown Richmond Hill has three districts, each with its own identifiable character and identity. The districts set the context for land use and built form improvements building on unique existing conditions, characteristics and opportunities. It is important to recognize that, while there are three distinct districts, it is the synergy of their combination that results in a single identifiable entity.

Uptown District

The Uptown District covers the area from Wright Street/Dunlop Street in the south to Leventdale Road and the northern lot line of 10441-10459 Yonge Street (Dairy Queen Plaza) in the north. With the exception of an apartment building and St. Mary Immaculate Church, the District is generally characterized by low-rise automobile-oriented commercial retail uses as depicted by the photos on this page. Yonge Street has a wide right-of-way, transitioning from four to five lanes north of Bedford Park Avenue.

The existing plazas and parking lots in the Uptown District should, over time, be redeveloped as a new mixed-use residential neighbourhood in mid to high-rise street-related buildings. The ground floors of new buildings would be ideal locations for new commercial and retail uses that require a larger format than the main street style provided in the Village District. The Uptown District can significantly increase the number of residents in the Downtown to support the retail uses in the Village District and ensure the area remains vibrant.

Village District

The Village District is bounded by Major Mackenzie Drive in the south and Wright Street/Dunlop Street in the north. The Village is the historic heart of Downtown Richmond Hill. The key distinguishing features of the Village include its location on a hilltop, landmark public buildings and churches, continuous sidewalk-oriented retail, restaurants, cultural destinations, narrower street widths and adjacent historic residential neighbourhoods. The Village is characterized by primarily low-rise buildings, parking in the rear, varying front yard setbacks and a number of buildings with heritage interest. The photographs on this page show the general character of the Village. There is a new mid-rise mixed-use building on Yonge Street and a number of others located on side streets.

The vision for the Village District is to maintain the low-rise built form character of the area with a focus on infill development with residential, retail and office uses. Smaller format boutique and niche market retail uses in the Village would be complemented by other forms of retail in the other districts. In addition, the existing rear lanes and parking offer the opportunity to create a system of courtyards that would distinguish the Village from other downtowns in the GTA.

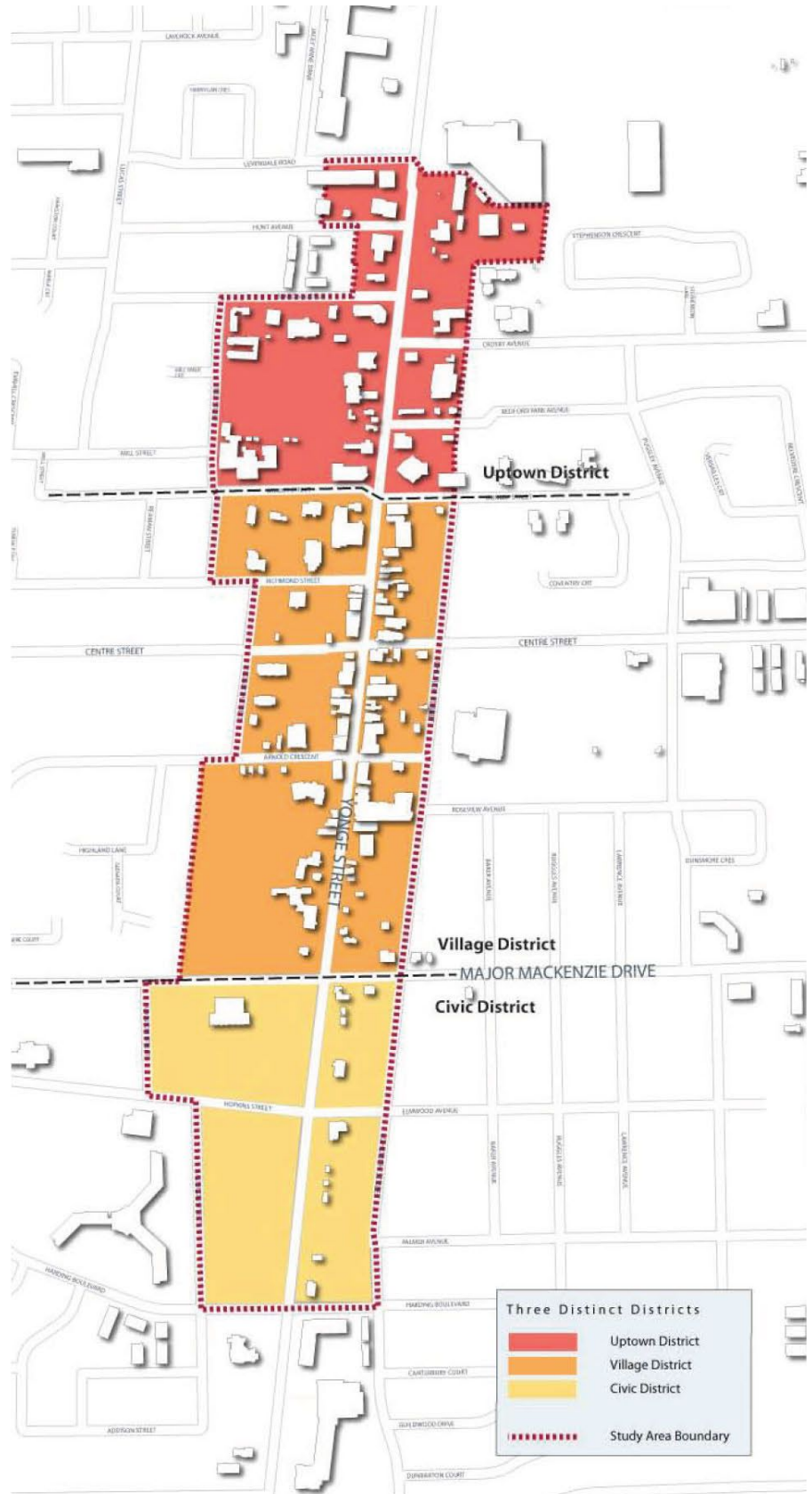
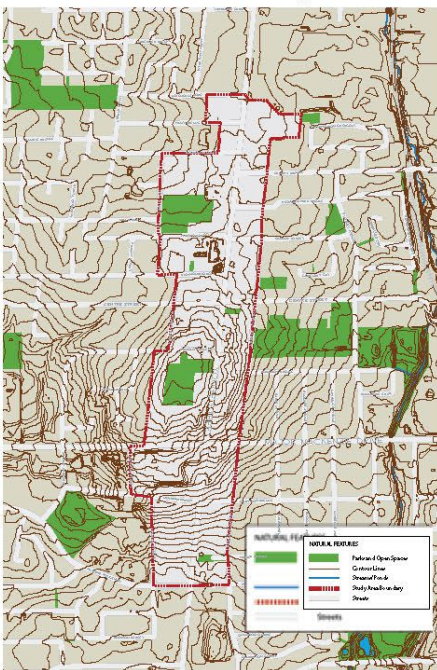
Civic District

The Civic District is bounded by Major Mackenzie Drive to the north and Harding Boulevard to the south. With the exception of the Richmond Hill Central Library, the west side of Yonge Street is largely undeveloped. This area is framed by three high-rise condominiums and several public institutional uses, including the police and fire station, the hospital and the aquatic centre. Highway oriented businesses and a residential neighbourhood are located further east. A high-rise condominium under construction abuts the south end of the District. The

east side of Yonge Street has a mix of residential, office and commercial uses, many of which are located in houses. Town owned lands adjacent to the Civic District should also be considered to be within this District.

The Civic District should become the civic heart of Downtown Richmond Hill, with a new Town Hall and mixed office and residential development served by public transit. The large parcels of vacant and under-used sites provide an opportunity to introduce a significant new residential population that will support new commercial retail uses, as well as existing retail north of Major Mackenzie Drive in the Village District.

Location of Downtown on a hilltop



Three Distinct Districts

2.1 Land Use



Key Direction

The Strategy plans for a mix of uses that reflect the role of Downtown as a town-wide and regional attraction. Downtown is envisioned as a vibrant and diverse environment where people live, work and play. More residents living within easy walking distance is critical to help to support retail and commercial activity on Yonge Street. Retail and commercial uses at grade, close to the street edge, are an essential ingredient to creating an appealing pedestrian area.



Above: Examples of buildings with a mix of ground related uses that animate the street

Recommendations

1. The Downtown Secondary Plan should be based on land use categories, as illustrated on the facing page.

The Land Use Strategy defines the area according to the broad categories of Downtown, Village, and Institutional and Civic Centre. Three open spaces are indicated: Ransom Park, the proposed Palmer Avenue Park, and the proposed extension to Kozak Parkette in the north-east corner of the Study Area. Within the Downtown and Village categories, Centre, Transition and Neighbourhood areas are defined.

The Downtown land use categories bookend the Village. The Neighbourhood land use categories edge the Study Area. The general intent of each of the land use categories illustrated on the map on the facing page are described as follows:

The Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts



Downtown Centre:

- high density mixed-use development in a more urban form
- retail, commercial and office use
- high density residential development is an essential component to support high order transit planned for Yonge Street
- all buildings should be street related
- ground floor retail should be required north of Wright/Dunlop to the end of the Study Area

Downtown Neighbourhood:

- primarily residential uses with higher densities
- these areas provide for transitions to the adjacent lower-density residential neighbourhoods, while acting as a buffer to the higher intensity of uses along Yonge Street

Village Centre:

- predominantly retail, with specialty shopping, restaurants and cultural attractions
- infill development is appropriate along Yonge Street or in behind the frontage buildings with a mix of retail, commercial, office and residential uses

Village Neighbourhood:

- primarily residential
- low and medium density residential infill

Downtown and Village Transition:

- identified on side streets (generally corresponds to property boundaries) as a transition to the adjacent and abutting lower density residential neighbourhoods
- mix of office, commercial, retail and residential uses in a scale and form that ensures compatibility with the adjacent neighbourhoods.

Civic Centre:

- intended as a focus for office and other civic uses

Institutional:

- recognizes existing institutional uses such as the theatre, churches and cemetery

Open Space:

- recognizes existing and designated open space in the area
- Open Space and public facilities should be permitted in all of the land use categories. The Public Realm Framework sets out the recommendations for open space.



Land Use	
	Downtown Centre
	Downtown Transition
	Village Centre
	Village Transition
	Downtown Neighbourhood
	Village Neighbourhood
	Civic
	Institutional
	Open Space
	Study Area Boundary

Land Use Categories

2.2 Heritage

Key Direction

The Strategy ensures that heritage buildings will remain prominent as intensification occurs.

Recommendations

1. The Strategy for height recommends concentrating height on the north and south ends of Downtown and providing a transition of building heights towards the Village District, to preserve views of church steeples.
2. The current requirements for viewplane studies should be carried forward in the new Downtown Secondary Plan. New development in Downtown should verify that the height, massing, or building design does not obstruct the view of church steeples in the Village District by completing a view plane analysis.
3. Infill development should respect the importance of heritage buildings in the Downtown (see Section 2.4: Urban Design Considerations).
4. Existing heritage buildings should be integrated with new development where possible (e.g. the old school house at the theatre).
5. Heritage façades should be adapted and revealed.
6. New buildings should avoid mimicry, over embellishment, or historic pastiche—new construction should be of its time.
7. New development should be planned in a way that it is subordinate to heritage character (e.g. greater setback, different materials).



An example of a new building that fits into its historic context



An example of a the existing church steeples that are a key feature of the Downtown skyline



A number of heritage properties exist in the adjacent residential neighbourhoods such as the one pictured at Church Street S and Centre Street E.

Yonge Street, between Major Mackenzie Drive and Wright Street/Dunlop Street, clearly sets Downtown apart from the rest of Richmond Hill. Its distinguishing characteristics include an authentic Main Street framed by low-rise residential neighbourhoods. This portion of Yonge Street is made up primarily of low buildings with commercial uses at grade and office or residential uses above. There are varied setbacks, with narrow frontages, typically one to two bays in width.

The Village District is recognized for its heritage buildings, as shown on the map on the facing page. The four churches: St. Mary's Anglican Church, Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church, Richmond Hill United Church and St. Mary Immaculate Church add a unique and distinct character and charm to the area.



Above are examples of contemporary buildings that are subordinate to existing heritage structures

8. New development should be planned in a way that is compatible with the rhythm of the facades of heritage buildings.
9. Work in new and old buildings should be of the highest quality materials.
10. Angular planes and setbacks should be used to balance the scale of new development with the historic streetscape.



Identified potential and designated heritage properties

2.3 Height and Density



Examples of buildings with contextually appropriate height and massing

Key Direction

This Strategy assigns the greatest heights and densities to the Uptown and Civic Districts. These Districts have many vacant and under-used sites that could be available for taller buildings. This enables the primarily low-rise character of the Village District to be protected, while accommodating growth.

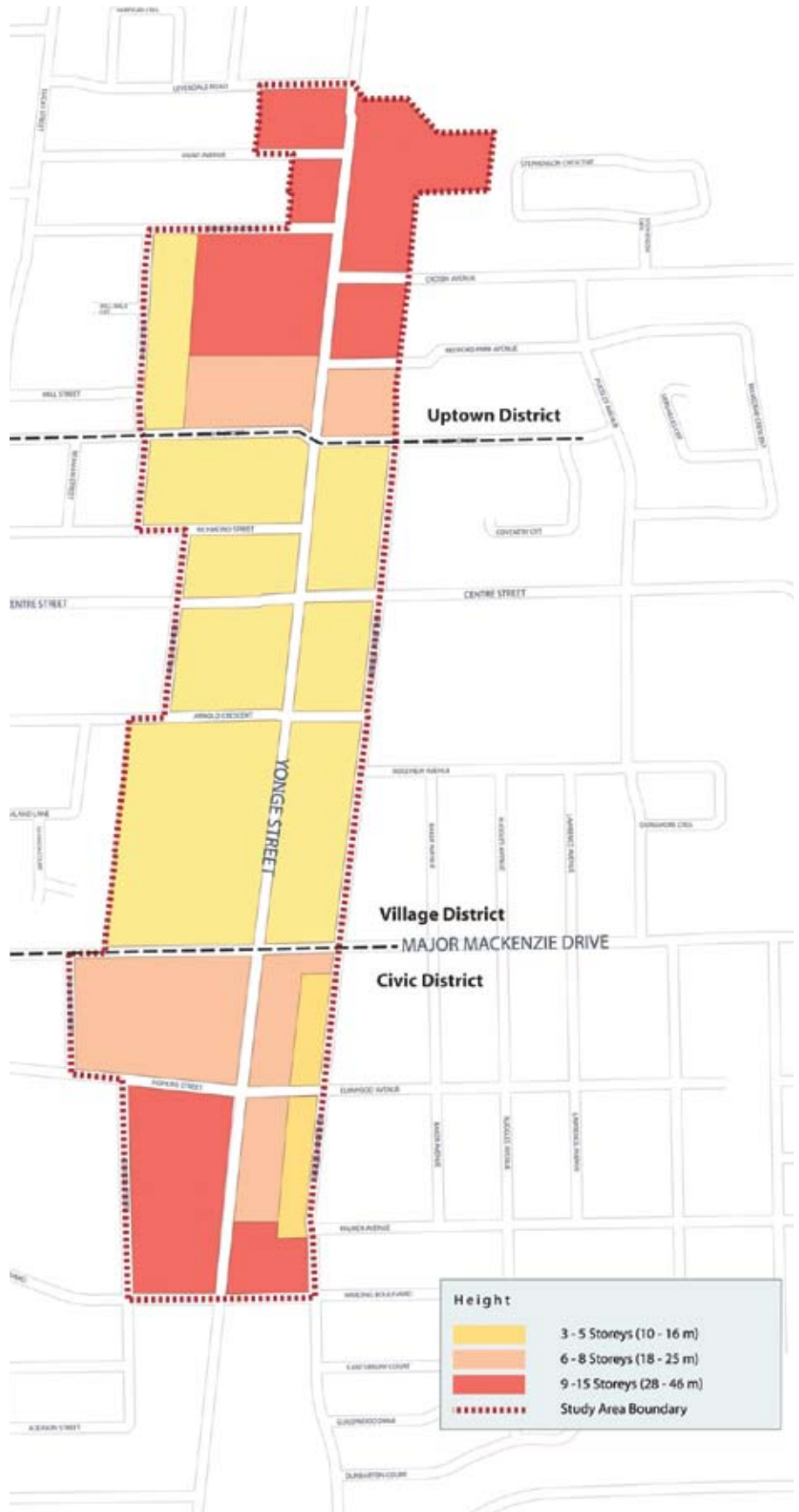
The height and density recommended for Downtown Richmond Hill is considered appropriate within the context of the Provincial and Regional planning policies and the Town's urban structure of other centres. The Regional Centre is being planned to accommodate significant density. The form of development recommended for Downtown Richmond Hill will be compatible with adjacent residential neighbourhoods and the inherent built form character of the Village.

Two transit stations for the proposed Yonge Street Rapid Transit are located in Downtown Richmond Hill – one between Major Mackenzie Drive and Harding Boulevard, and the other at Wright Street/Crosby Avenue. Development near these stations will support transit by providing the appropriate densities in compact, walkable environments with easy access to the nearest station. They will also provide uses that serve as generators of activity.

Recommendations

1. The height strategy proposes to book end permissions for height at the north and south ends of Downtown. Height will transition from taller buildings to mid-rise buildings in the Village, where it steps down to three to five storeys.
2. The possibility of additional height may be appropriate along Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive where taller buildings may be concentrated and to transition to the Village District and adjacent residential neighbourhoods.
3. In order for additional height to be considered, certain minimum performance criteria have to be met:
 - principle property frontage on Major Mackenzie Drive East/West;
 - principle property frontage on Yonge Street, or a through lot condition with Yonge street frontage;
 - all aspects of the building (including the mechanical penthouse) within the proposed angular planes (see Section 2.4);
 - all parking for the development is provided on site or within a public parking structure; and,
 - buildings transition between areas of differing scale and intensity.
4. If the minimum performance criteria outlined above are met, the Town may consider additional height through Section 37 of the Planning Act in exchange for public benefits such as:
 - heritage preservation and enhancement;
 - streetscape improvements;
 - provision of public parking;
 - public art;
 - provision of rear courtyard space; or,
 - provision of affordable housing.

5. The use of an angular plane is a good tool to ensure that upper storeys do not impose an inappropriate scale on the street or adjacent neighbourhoods and to minimize the impact of shadows. Angular planes are described in Section 2.4: Built Form.
6. For the 20 year planning horizon, it is considered reasonable to plan for an average density target of 130 residents and/or employees per hectare over the entire Study Area.
7. It is expected that, based on the development potential of each of the three districts that the Uptown District will achieve the highest densities, followed by the Civic District. The Village District will achieve the lowest density within the Study Area.
8. The Yonge Street Corridor is planned to achieve an overall long term density target of 2.5 Floor Space Index (FSI).



Height

2.4 Built Form

Key Direction

The Strategy envisions a variety of new buildings that contribute to the creation of a high quality public realm within a context that ensures a sensitive transition to adjacent residential neighbourhoods.

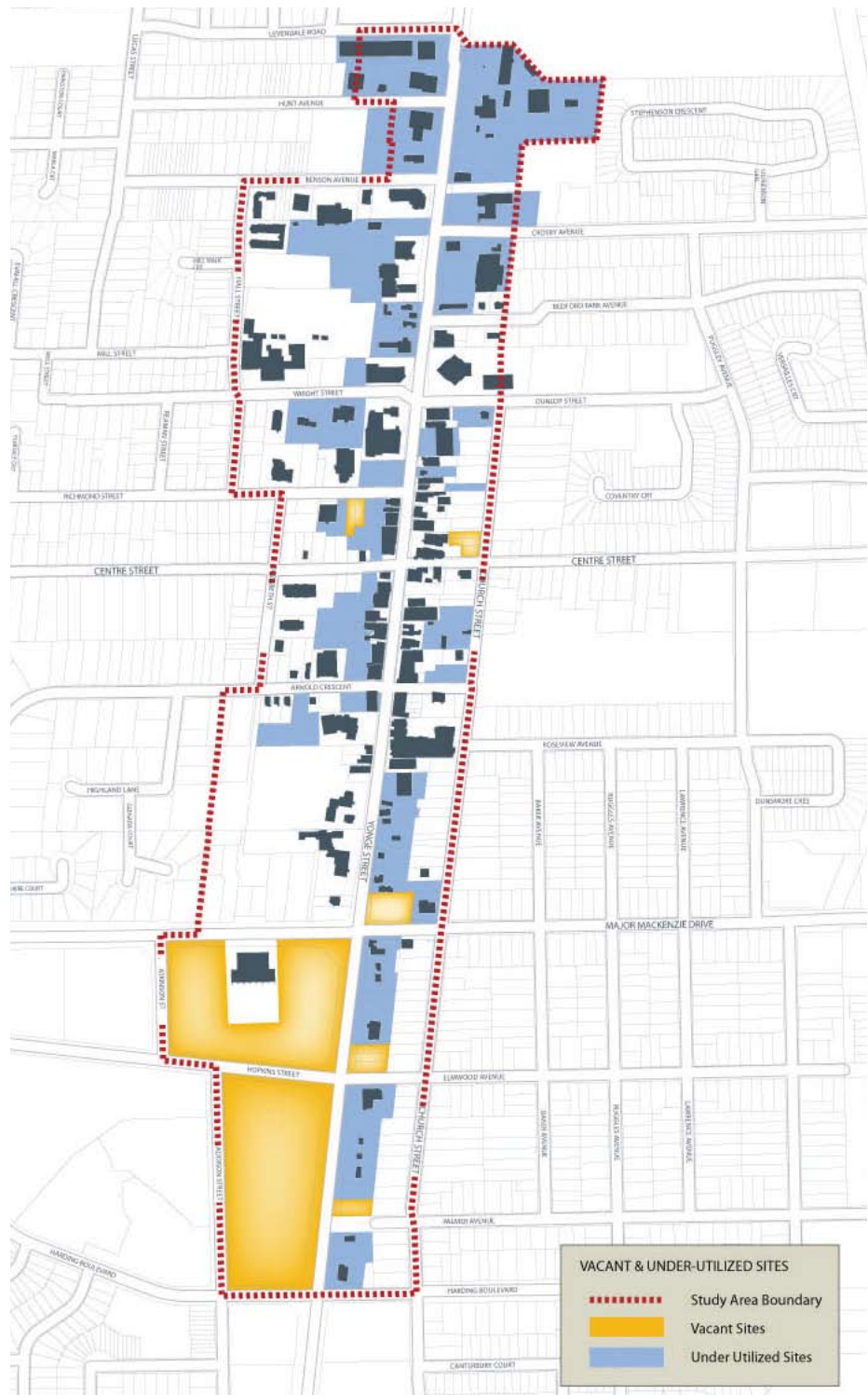
The distinct identity of Downtown Richmond Hill is linked to its human scale and fine grained rhythm of streets and buildings. Central to the Strategy is a concern for the comfort, convenience, security and visual interest of the pedestrian, as shaped by the experience on the sidewalk.

Recommendations

The Demonstration Plan on the facing page illustrates one scenario for the long term build out of Downtown Richmond Hill. Development will not occur uniformly in scale or in time across the area. Downtown is comprised of areas that are established, areas that are dynamic and changing and areas that are vacant or under-used. The map on this page illustrates the areas that are vacant or under-used that present a tremendous opportunity for intensification in Downtown Richmond Hill.

The Demonstration Plan illustrates the built form strategy with respect to the location and massing of buildings, their relation to the street, special conditions at corners and forms that respond to specific uses such as in the Civic Centre. Other elements of the Demonstration Plan, such as the green space and streetscape treatment are described in the next section.

The built form strategy is supported by a description of urban design considerations, building types and the various applications of the building types to demonstration sites.



1. All buildings in Downtown Richmond Hill should be street related. Buildings should provide a relatively consistent and contiguous street edge that give a strong identity to Yonge Street.
2. The built form strategy encourages distinction, variety and creative architectural responses, while being sensitive to the particular and specific conditions of the context in the block and District.
3. Structures should have a base building height above which the additional storeys will step back. In the Village Centre land use category the base building height should be up to three storeys. In the Downtown Centre land use category the base buildings should be up to six storeys.
4. The tallest buildings should be located in the Uptown and Civic Districts. The Village District will be characterized by low and mid rise buildings.
5. Landmarks such as the new Centre for the Performing Arts and a possible new Town Hall should be distinct from the backdrop of the street edge buildings.
6. The Urban Design Considerations (see page 32) should be used to formulate detailed guidelines that could be included in the Downtown Secondary Plan.
7. Consideration shall be given to the location of utilities within the public right-of-way as well as on private property. Utilities shall be clustered or grouped where possible to minimize visual impact. The Town encourages utility providers to consider innovative methods of containing utility services on or within streetscape features such as gateways, lamps posts, transit shelters, etc., when determining appropriate locations for large utility equipment and utility cluster sites.



Demonstration plan - built form

Built Form - Uptown District

The Uptown district is envisaged to become a high density, mixed-use urban neighbourhood with buildings that range from mid to high-rise forms. The current larger format commercial uses may be integrated into new developments to make it more pedestrian friendly. The Uptown District can significantly increase the number of residents in the Downtown to support the retail uses in the Village. The photo below simulates the change in view looking north on Yonge Street from automobile-oriented uses to buildings that accommodate new residents, offices and shops.

It is important that building height in the Uptown District transition to the Village District in order to protect its generally low-rise character. For that reason, 6-8 storeys buildings are suggested in the block north of Wright Street / Dunlop Street.



Uptown District: existing conditions



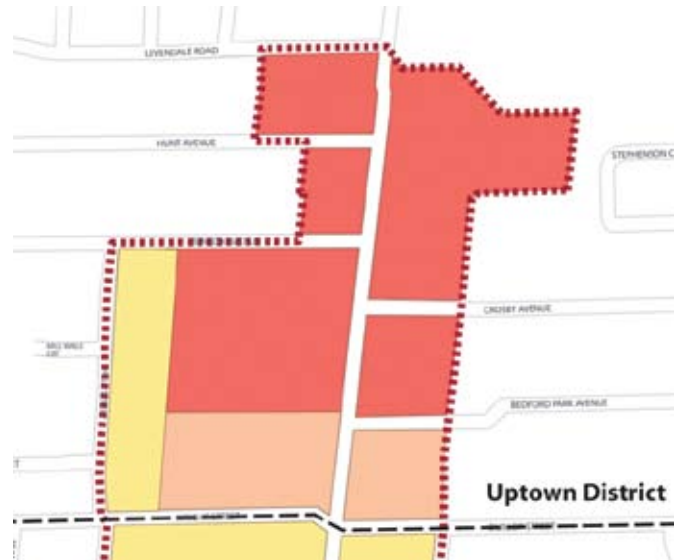
Uptown District: potential development scenario



Demonstration Plan - Uptown District



Land Use - Uptown District



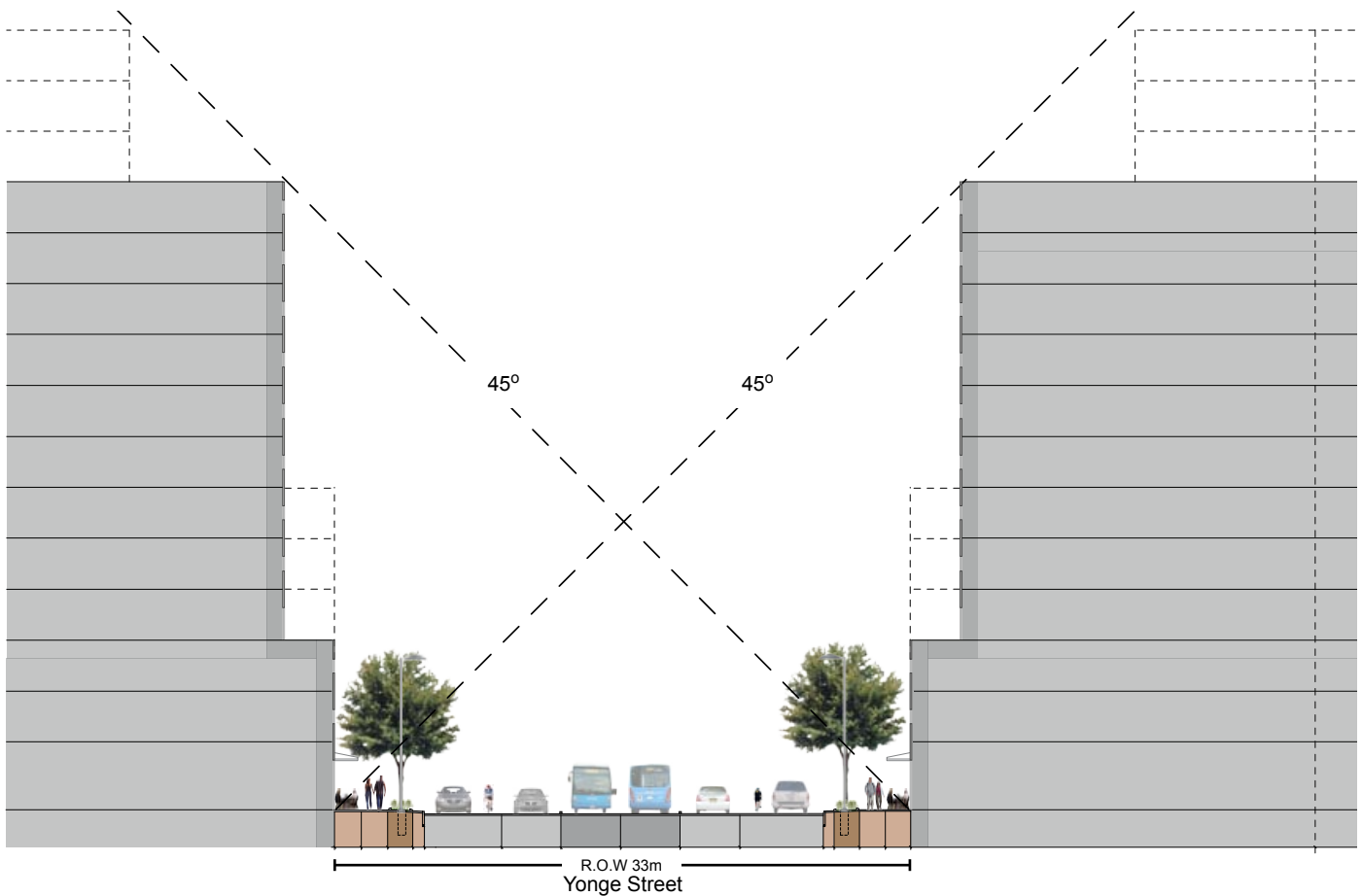
Height - Uptown District



The cross section at the bottom of this page illustrates the relationship of buildings to Yonge street, the massing and height that results from the use of a 45° angular plane, and the transition to adjacent neighbourhoods.

Yonge Street

- The base building could be up to six storeys, above which additional storeys are stepped back.
- Measured from the edge of the Yonge Street right-of-way, the 45° angular plane determines a 12 storey building, above which the building is stepped back.
- The angular plane allows another three storeys, for a total building height of 15 storeys.



Uptown District - Full Lot Cross Section

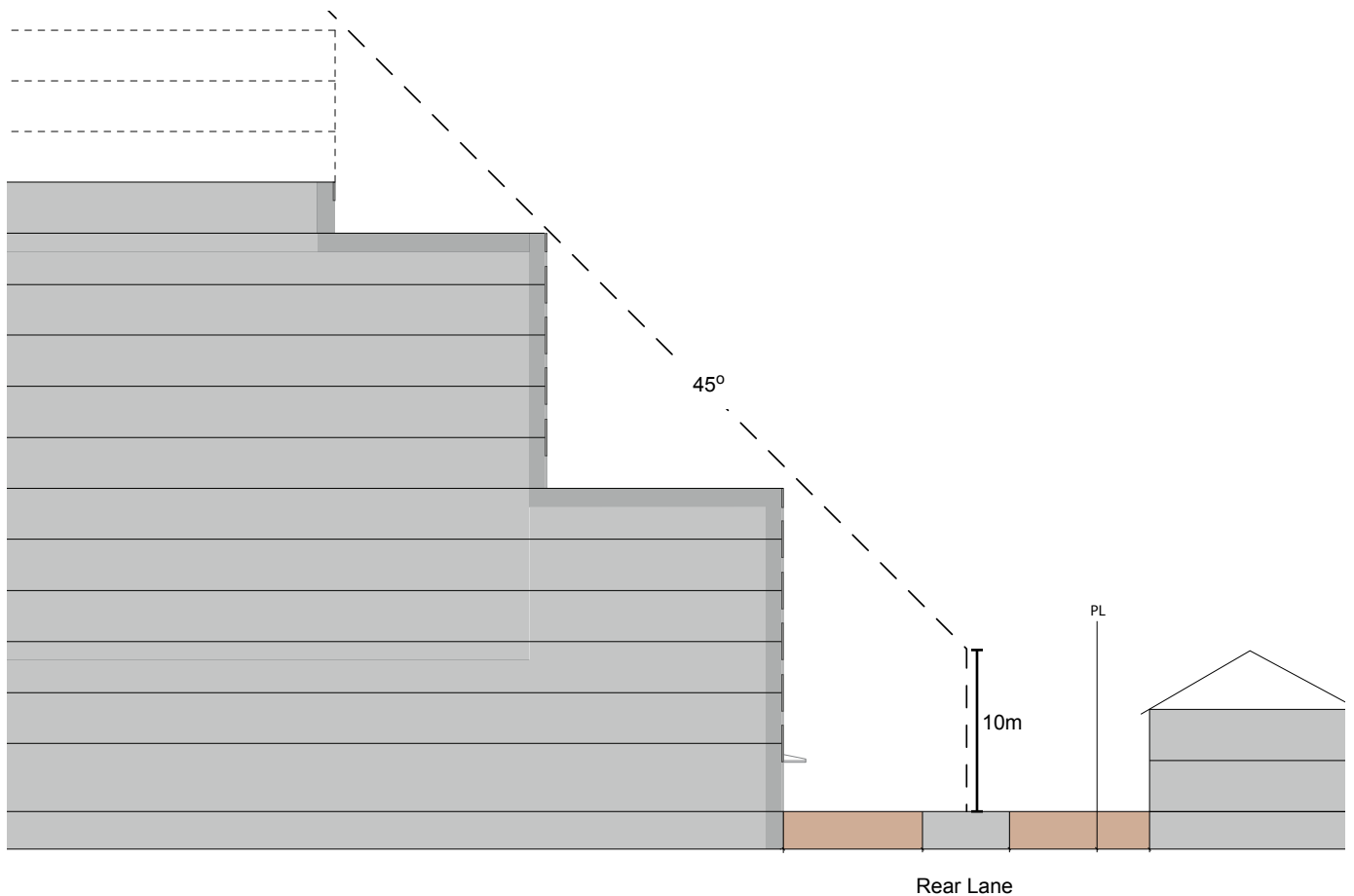
(Diagram continues on facing page)

Transition to neighbourhood:

- The angular plane is projected from the centre line of the lane, at a point 10m above grade. This enables an appropriate transition to the adjacent residential neighbourhood generally characterized by 3 storey (10m high) buildings.
- When there is no lane, the angular plane should be projected from the rear property line. In no case should it be projected from a distance of less than 7.5m from an existing residence.
- By protecting a 45° angular plane, the building's base is limited to six storeys, above which it steps back to accommodate five storeys, followed by an additional four storeys.



Cut line for section - Uptown District



Built Form - Village District

The Demonstration Plan for the Village illustrates infill around existing main street buildings, a new mixed-use development currently under construction and existing heritage buildings. The Demonstration Plan indicates future street edge development, such as that south of the Centre for the Performing Arts, and new buildings to infill deep lots on the west side of Yonge Street. A new building is illustrated in the north east corner of Yonge Street and Arnold Crescent. This replaces the existing one storey building with a mid-rise structure that could include public parking. It could create an important landmark at a central intersection and an appealing street edge connection to the arena.



10097 and 10101 Yonge Street rendering with grade-related uses, base building and step back to upper storeys



Potential building with 3 Storey Podium with ground floor retail uses



Potential building with 3 Storey Podium with ground floor retail uses



Potential building with 3 Storey Podium with ground floor retail uses



Land Use - Village District



Height - Village District



Demonstration Plan - Village District

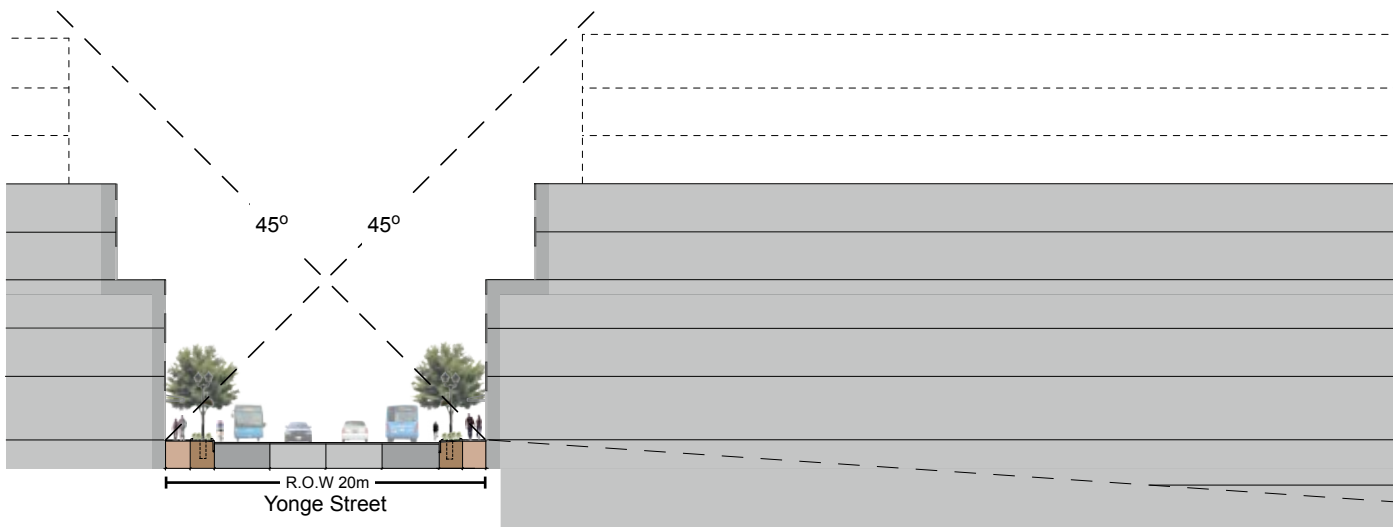


The cross sections on this page illustrate two conditions that exist in the Village. The lots are deeper on the west side of Yonge Street, so the critical conditions exist on the east side. In addition, there is a drop in elevation between Yonge Street and Church Street for most of the District. The sections illustrate the condition that forms when new development occurs on a half lot (half the depth of the land between Yonge Street and Church Street) and on a full lot.

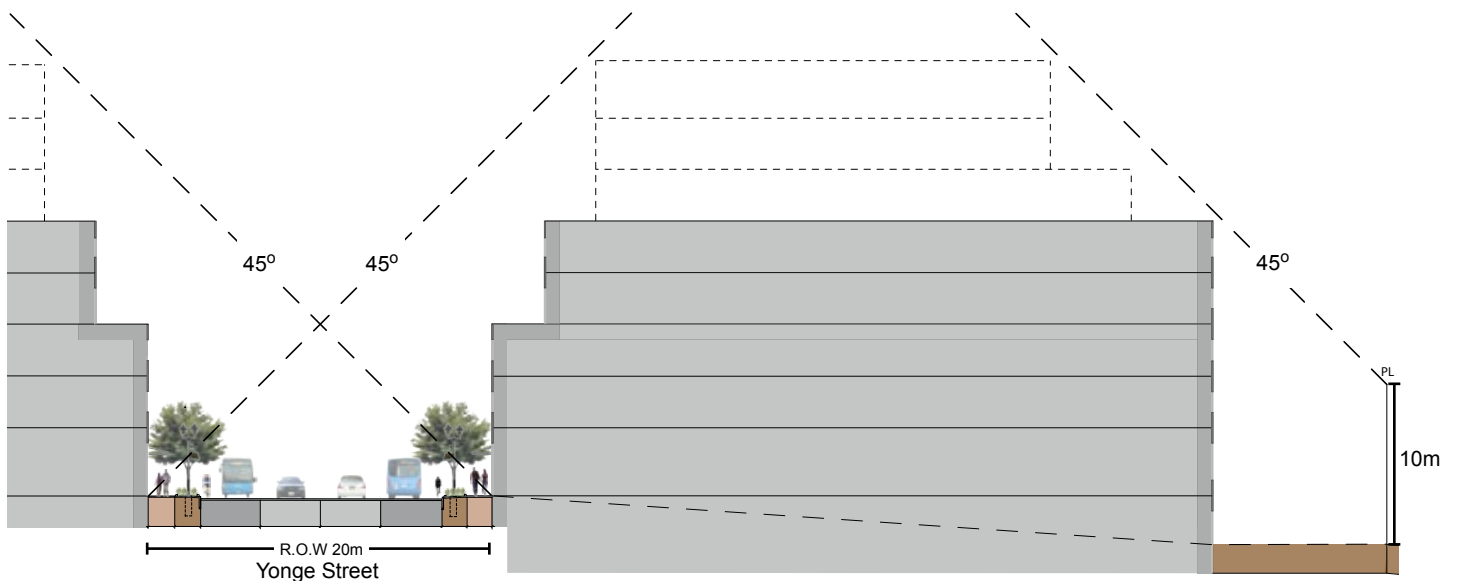
The angular planes establish two conditions: first, the relationship of the buildings to Yonge Street and the resulting street wall condition; second, the relationship of development to the residential community east of Yonge Street.

Yonge Street

- The base building could be up to 3 storeys above which the building should step back subject to the urban design considerations (see page 32).
- Measured from the edge of the right of way, the 45° angular plane determines an 8 storey building subject to the performance criteria outlined in Section 2.3.



Village District - full lot cross section



Village District - half Lot cross section

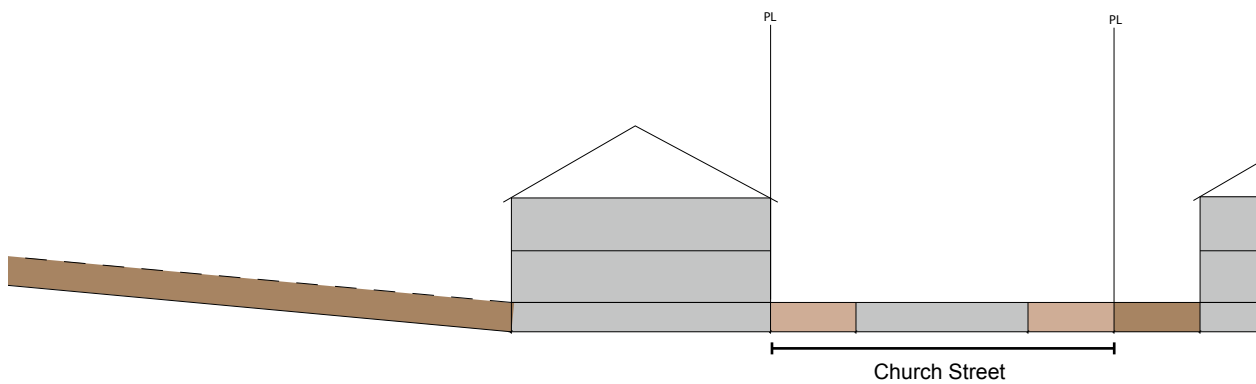
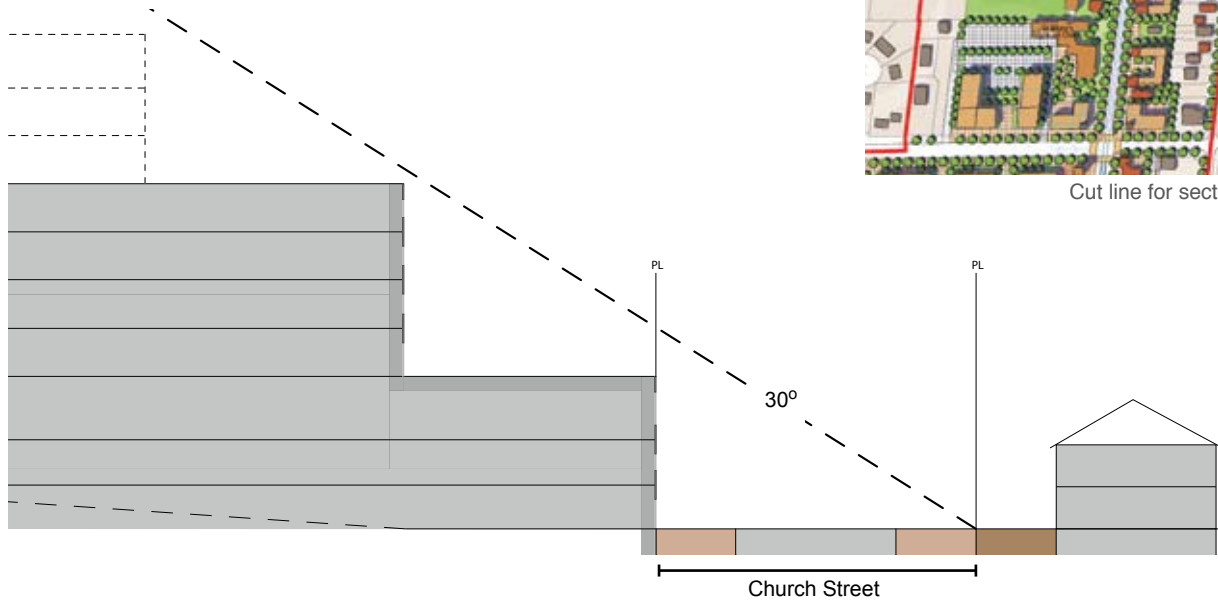
(Diagram continues on facing page)

Transition to neighbourhood:

- On a half lot, the 45° angular plane is projected from the rear property line at a point 10m above grade.
- On a full lot, the 30° angular plane is projected from the edge of the Church Street right of way to ensure new buildings step back the upper storeys to create a condition along the street with buildings that are compatible in scale with adjacent houses.



Cut line for section - Village District



Built Form - Civic District



Civic District: Existing conditions



Civic District: Potential development scenario

The Demonstration Plan illustrates buildings that define street edges and that are organized to create permeability through open space, pedestrian walkways and local entrance roads. Topography, proximity to the intersection and planned transit affect the opportunity to extend streets through the blocks on the west side of Yonge Street.

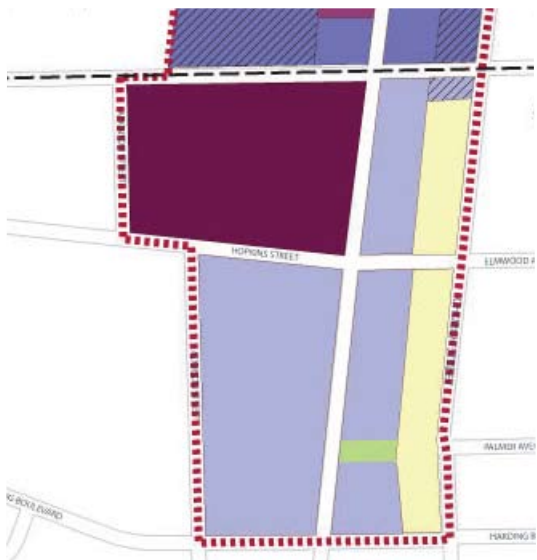
The Demonstration Plan illustrates office and civic uses located at the southwest corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street, forming an urban square south of the library. New buildings define a civic square at the corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street. In addition, new mixed-use buildings are located further south on the west side of Yonge Street. They define the street edge and are set back to reveal views of church steeples in the Village. They are placed to create a street wall along the wide Yonge Street right-of-way. On the east side of Yonge Street, new street edge buildings accommodate residents, shops and offices in buildings that make an appropriate transition to the adjacent residential neighbourhood.



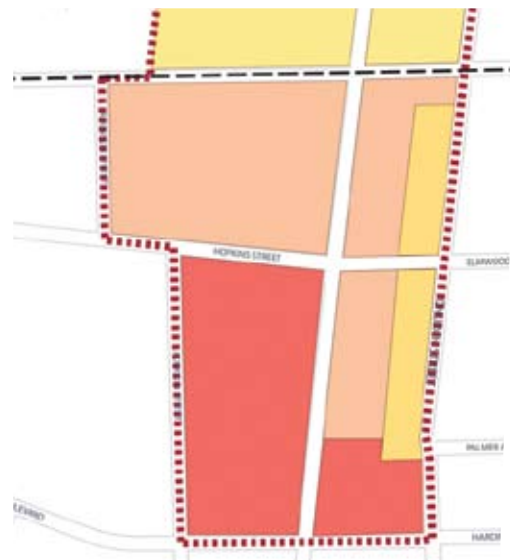
Above: Examples of civic buildings with prominent architectural features



Demonstration Plan - Civic District



Land Use - Civic District



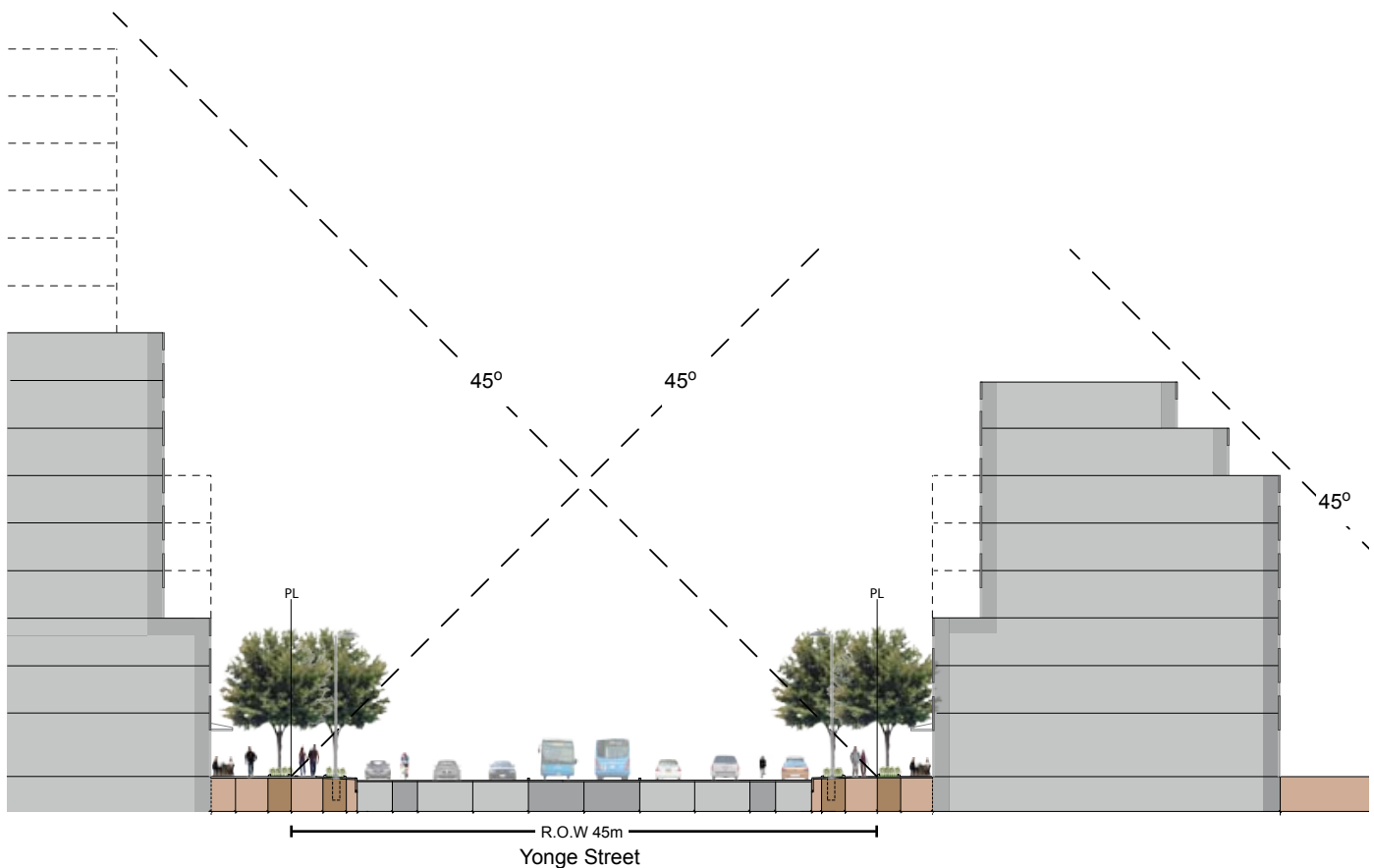
Height - Civic District



The cross section at the bottom of this page illustrates the relationship of buildings to Yonge street, the massing and height that results from the angular planes and the transition to adjacent neighbourhoods.

Yonge Street

- The base building could be up to six storeys.
- Measured from the edge of the Yonge Street right of way, the 45° angular plane determines the potential for a 15 storey building on the west side of the street.
- The building on the east side is controlled by the angular plane projected from the rear property line of the adjacent residential lot.

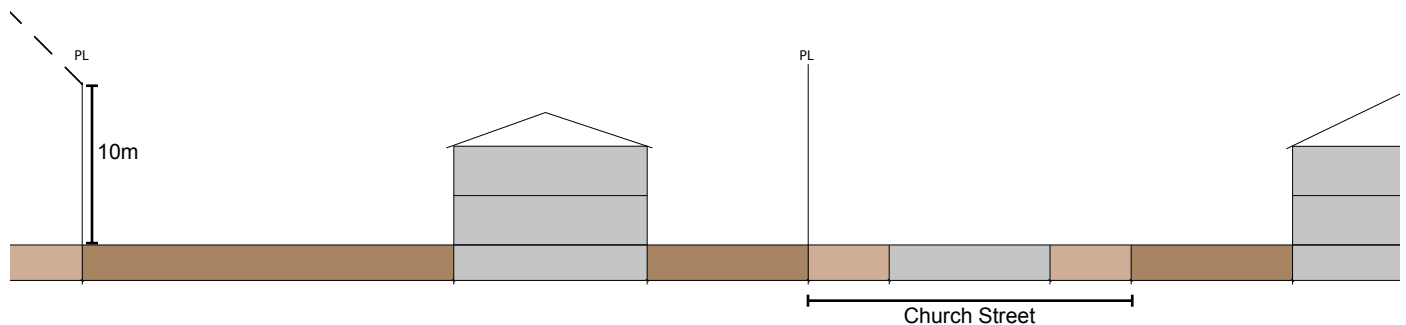


Transition to neighbourhood:

- The 45° angular plane is projected from a point 10m above grade at the rear property boundary. This enables an appropriate transition to the adjacent residential neighbourhood generally characterized by 3 storey (10m high) buildings.
- Application of the 45° angular plane determines the potential for an eight storey building.
- On a full lot, the 30° angular plane is projected from the far edge of the street right of way. This is similar to the transition suggested in the Village District where angular planes were determined through the approval process for the Tridel development.



Cut line for section - Civic District



Built Form: Urban Design Considerations for Transit - Oriented Development

Detailed urban design and architectural control guidelines should be prepared. These urban design considerations are some of the key elements to be addressed in the detailed guidelines to ensure that new development supports transit.

Building Elements

Buildings should be designed to reinforce continuity of the streetscape. The base, middle and top of buildings should be differentiated from each other:

- The base of the buildings is where the pedestrian can best sense its scale and quality. This is where one can touch the materials and look into the storefronts. Accordingly, the building base should be designed to reinforce the pedestrian scale at the street. The building elements should be highly detailed and the quality of the materials should be the highest;
- The middle of the building is important for its mass on the street. The building is defining space and reinforcing the scale of the street. As a result, the body of the building above the base should be articulated in a manner that is consistent with that of buildings in the block; and,
- The top of the building is the opportunity to distinguish it on the skyline, making it unique from a distance. The top should be distinguished from the rest and designed to contribute to the unique visual quality of the skyline.

Orientation and Placement

The location and orientation of buildings is important because of the impact on the street at the pedestrian level. In order to create a comfortable public realm, a consistent and active street edge is required. As a result:

- buildings should orient to and be placed at the street edge;
- the ground floor building face should include clearly defined primary entry points with direct access to the sidewalk;
- generally, buildings should be placed at the lot line. There will be special conditions where the building may be set back in order to expose a view of a heritage building or to create a pedestrian mews on the sidewalk; and,
- in order to create a consistent and continuous street edge condition, there should generally not be side yard setbacks, except in the areas where a transition to residential uses occurs.

The Village District

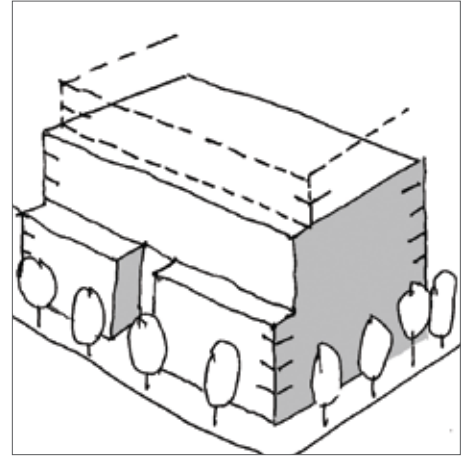
Courtyard buildings are a special condition and therefore:

- buildings should be located on the site to best reinforce the pedestrian spaces;
- building setbacks should reflect the setback of adjacent buildings; and,
- where building faces are adjacent to a courtyard, they should be oriented to the courtyard.

Street Wall

The street wall is created by the buildings that edge the street. The ability of the street to generate a space at a scale that promotes a pedestrian environment depends upon the scale and setback of the buildings as outlined above. In addition, activity at street level is critical if the street is to become a vibrant place. Accordingly:

- all at-grade street walls should have windows; where retail is required at grade, a minimum of 75% of the frontage should have windows to achieve maximum visual transparency;



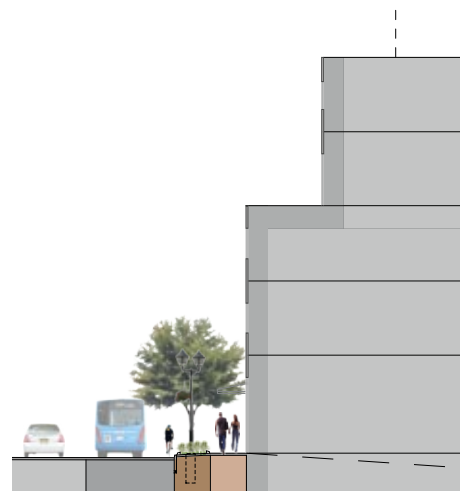
Clearly articulating the base, middle and top of buildings



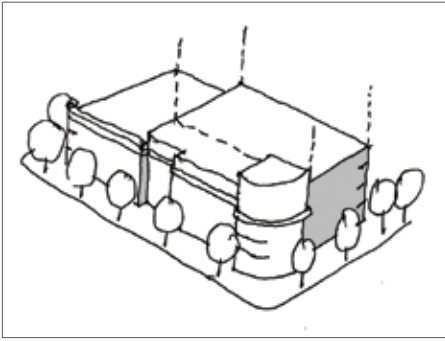
Buildings should generally be placed at the street edge, built to the lot line



Buildings with awnings to provide weather protection for pedestrians



Base building up to three storeys in the Village



Corner buildings should have special treatment on the facade and could have taller portions of the building.



Above: examples of corner treatments for buildings

- weather protection for pedestrians is encouraged through the use of awnings and canopies;
- frontages with non-commercial uses at grade should have frequent entries and windows;
- residential uses should include individual at-grade access and landscaping treatments;
- the fenestration of new buildings should complement the vertical rhythm of existing buildings in the block;
- for buildings facing Yonge Street, the base building should be no greater than four storeys in the Village Centre land use category and six storeys in the Downtown Centre land use category;
- upper storeys should step back 3-5m;
- the minimum building height in the Village District should be two storeys and 4 storeys in the Uptown and Civic Districts; and,
- the floor to ceiling height of the ground floor should be no less than 3m to ensure a prominent presence on the street.

Corner Sites

Corners are priority sites for the implementation of good urban design since they act as entrances and exits from Yonge Street to the surrounding area. They can offer the opportunity to provide window and door openings on the sides of the buildings as well as the face. As a result:

- new buildings on corner sites should orient to both street frontages; and,
- to distinguish buildings on corners, architectural treatment should include taller elements and other special features

Building Materials

The Village is particularly sensitive to the scale and quality of materials used in the historic buildings. The use of brick and stone as the basis for detailing the base of new infill buildings should be considered. In addition:

- the palette of materials and colours of existing buildings on the block should be the basis for selecting the materials for new buildings; and,
- exterior finishes should exhibit quality of workmanship, sustainability and ease of maintenance. Vinyl siding, plastic, plywood, darkly-tinted and mirrored glass are discouraged.

Environmental Design and Sustainable Development

The Design and Land Use Strategy promotes environmental sustainability through intensification of mixed use that supports increased transit use. An improved pedestrian environment and new public spaces will encourage more people to live Downtown and to walk to shops, services and transit stops.

- all new buildings should incorporate leading environmental standards for design and construction and incorporate energy efficient, environmentally friendly materials systems and processes;
- building heights should minimize the impact of wind and shadow on adjacent neighbourhoods, streets and parks;
- buildings should be articulated to intercept or diffuse wind at pedestrian levels;
- street trees and other landscape materials should be included in all development projects.

Development adjacent to Heritage Buildings

Infill development adjacent to heritage buildings should include facades that respect the heritage facades. In particular:

- new buildings should complement the horizontal and vertical alignment of facade elements of the neighbouring buildings;
- where a continuous streetscape built to the street exists, new development should be located to maintain the street wall;
- setbacks of new buildings will be permitted in certain conditions where such placement will enhance the prominence of the adjacent heritage building, and provide an opportunity to create a pedestrian mews, or where it could be a benefit to a business (for example, a restaurant seating area).



Image of infill adjacent to historic buildings. King Street, Toronto



Development adjacent to heritage buildings should respect the architectural orders and rhythms of adjacent buildings

Signage

Signs for advertising (such as on bus shelters or branding on benches), identification (business names, building names, park names), wayfinding and promotion are important to promoting a vibrant downtown. As such,

- they should be located at a consistent height on any block;
- they should be of durable materials that complement those buildings they are attached to;
- they should be designed in a clear and legible manner that is easy to read;
- they should be individual or punched lettering where possible;
- wayfinding signage should be of a consistent style and colour throughout the Downtown. It should be simple, use international symbols and be strategically located; and,
- within the Village District, signage should not be internally illuminated.

Wall mounted, projecting, hanging or plaque signs are appropriate in Downtown Richmond Hill.

Pylon and monument signs are typically used in the parking lots of developments where buildings are set back from the street. These signs are not appropriate in Downtown Richmond Hill.

Sidewalks in the Village District are narrow and pedestrian movement and barrier-free access is challenging in some locations. No A-frame signs should be permitted on the public sidewalk because of impact on pedestrian movement.



Various examples of appropriate signage that is compatible with the scale and character of its environment.



Built Form: Building Types

1. Row House and Stacked Row House

- appropriate as a transition to adjacent residential neighbourhoods in all Districts or in courtyards behind Yonge Street in the Village;
- requires amenity areas in front and rear yards;
- above grade amenity area may be provided on the roof of an attached rear parking garage.

2. Low-rise Residential (3-5 storeys)

- appropriate as a transition to adjacent residential neighbourhoods in all Districts;
- oriented to the street;
- residential units should have direct access to the street through a landscaped semi-private space;
- upper storeys above the third floor should step back.

3. Low-rise Mixed-use Building (3-5 storeys)

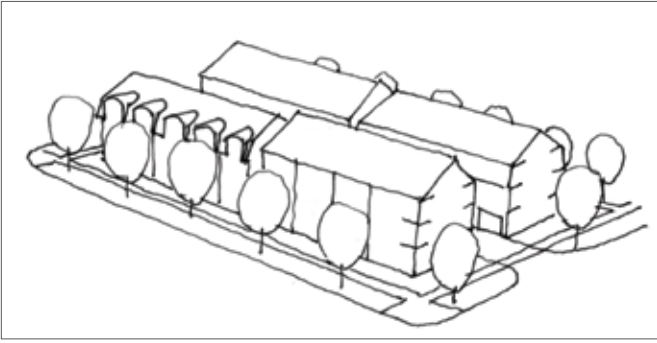
- appropriate for Yonge Street in the Village;
- oriented to the street;
- modest or no setback;
- should address both street frontages if located on a corner;
- upper storeys above the third floor should step back;
- highly articulated ground floor facade for at grade retail.

4. Mid-rise Mixed-use or Residential (7-12 storeys)

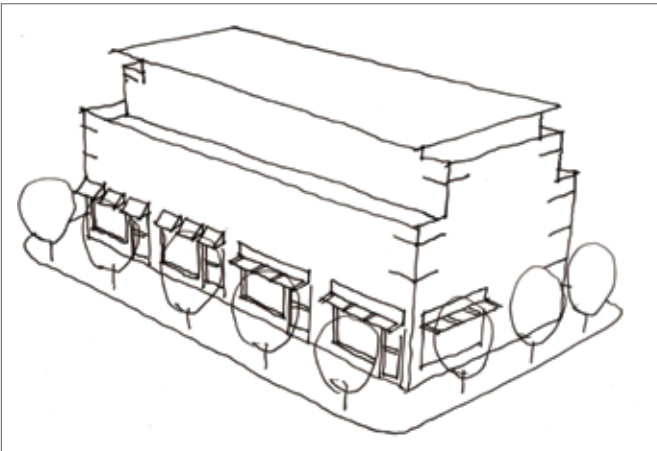
- appropriate for the Uptown and Civic District
- oriented to the street;
- should address both street frontages if located on a corner;
- will require at-grade retail in the Uptown District;
- in the Civic District where residential uses are at grade, units should have direct access to the street through a landscaped semi-private space;
- upper storeys should step back.

5. High-rise Mixed-use or Residential (15+ storeys)

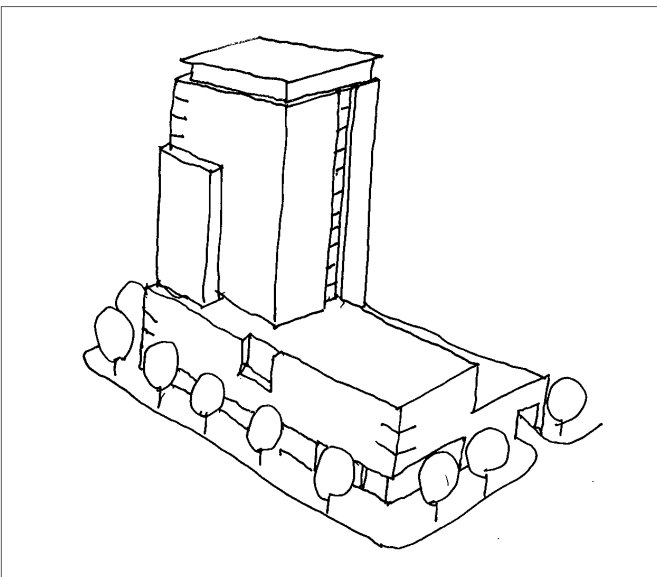
- oriented to the street;
- should address both street frontages if located on a corner;
- will require at-grade retail in the Uptown District;
- in the Civic District, where residential uses are at grade, units should have direct access to the street through a landscaped semi-private space;
- upper storeys should step back with smaller floorplates in a range of 700-800 m²;
- will need to confirm that views to the church spires are protected.



Low-rise residential building type



Mid-rise mixed-use building type



High-rise mixed-use or residential building type



Row house



Low-rise residential



Low-rise mixed-use development



Mid-rise mixed-use building



High-rise building



Built Form: Demonstration Sites

Development sites in the Uptown and Civic Districts are relatively unconstrained due to size of lots. In the case of the Civic District, sites are undeveloped. Intensification will be challenging in the Village District due to the complexity of conditions with respect to lot size, adjacent buildings, topography and heritage features. The map on this page indicates the various lot types.

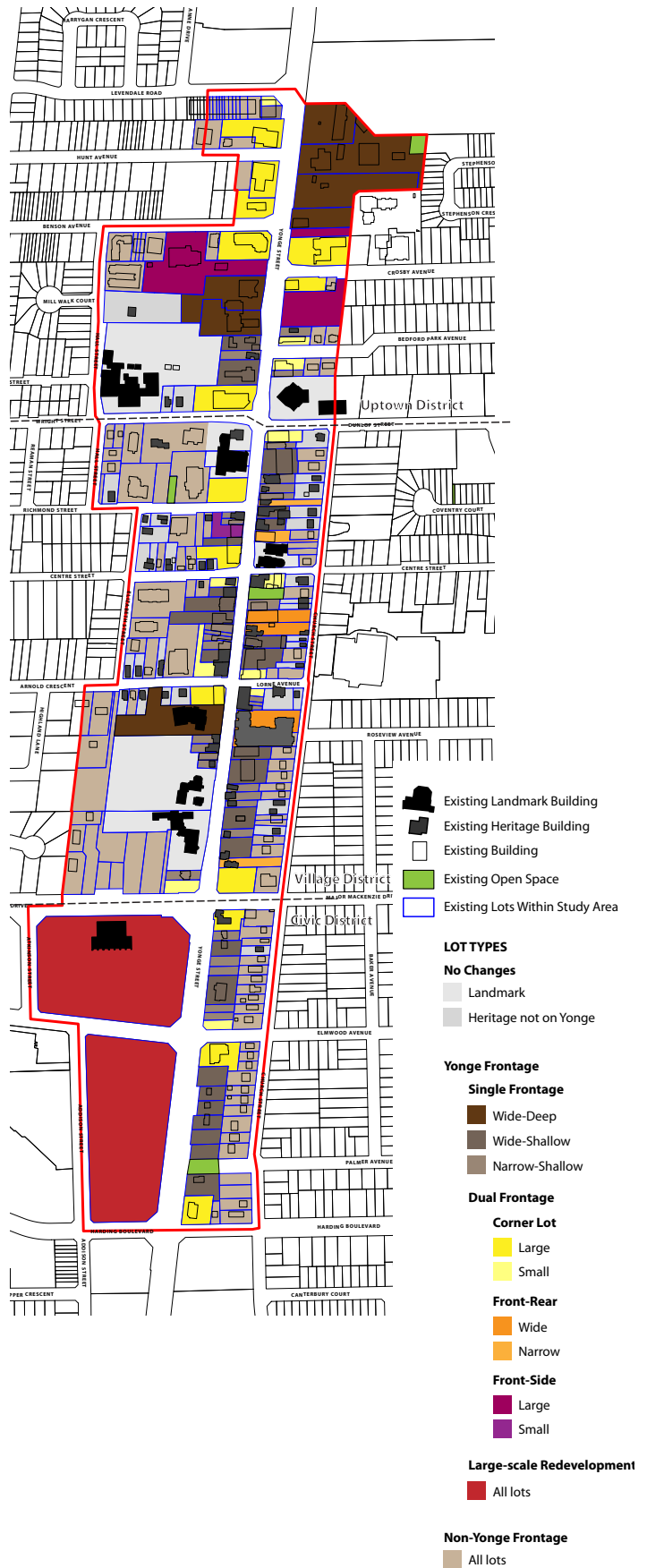
This section presents various potential scenarios for the future development of selected demonstration sites for each district on half block and through block sites. For half block sites in the Village District, the scenarios show a:

- site with an existing heritage building;
- site with an under-used rear lot behind an existing building with frontage on Yonge Street; and,
- site to be redeveloped.

One scenario shows a through block development.

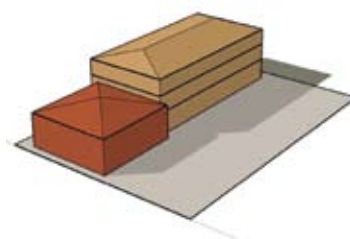
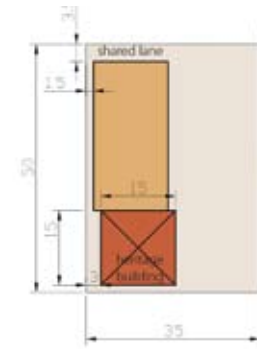
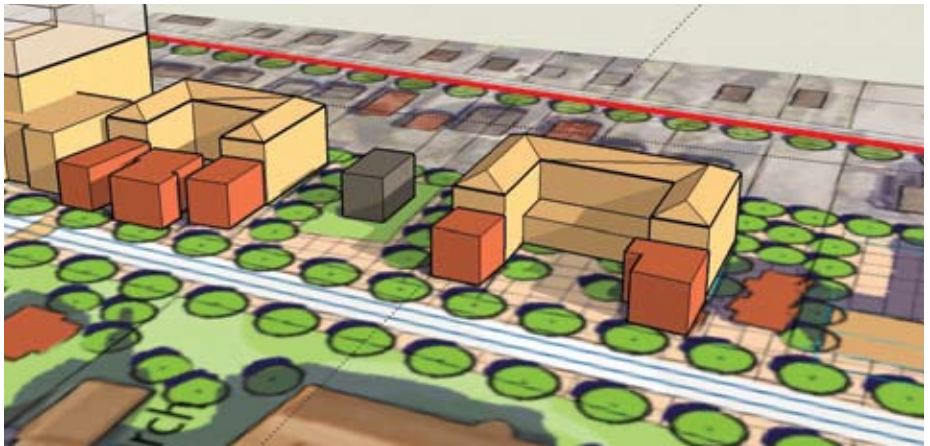


Demonstration Sites - Village District

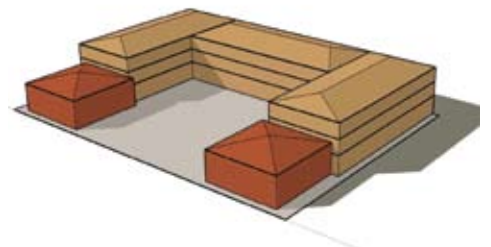
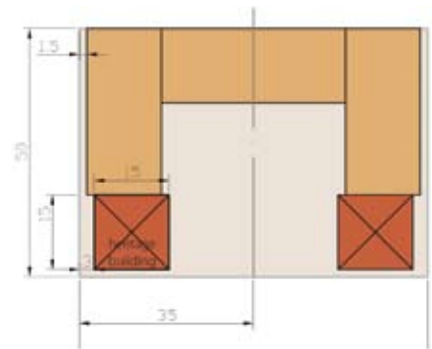


1. Village District - Demonstration Site #1: Site with an existing heritage building

Scenario A provides an example of the opportunities for intensification on narrow frontages with a half lot and lane access. The site includes buildings identified as having heritage significance (shown in red). A new building is illustrated behind the existing building leaving space at the side for off-street parking, landscape or outdoor amenity space. In this case, there would be minimal sideyard setbacks and windows would only be placed facing the courtyard. The new building is three storeys. If two lots are assembled as in **Scenario B**, a common courtyard space could be created.



Scenario A



Scenario B

2. Village District - Demonstration Site #2: Site with under-used rear lot behind an existing building with frontage on Yonge Street

The Demonstration Plan illustrates infill development that takes advantage of the space behind the Yonge Street buildings. In concert with an overall plan for parking, the existing parking and service areas provide an opportunity for the design of a network of courtyards that run parallel to Yonge Street. Courtyards could be created through infill development that would contain the outdoor space and provide a second tier of activity off the busy Yonge Street frontage.

The courtyards could be designed as pedestrian places that would also be used for parking and, over time, could be linked to provide another choice of access. These courtyards would complement the pedestrian zone along Yonge Street expanded where possible by slightly increasing setbacks of new buildings and varying the setbacks to create a mews.

The lots are deeper on the west side of Yonge Street and a different form of infill development can occur.

The Demonstration Plan illustrates infill development located behind buildings fronting on Yonge Street north of Arnold and along the south side of Centre Street. These deep lots can accommodate new buildings that define a rear courtyard space. There are existing mid-rise buildings in this block that would be compatible with new development.

A new street-related building is located between the existing apartment building and the flankage of Yonge Street buildings. It is located at the back of the Yonge Street lots, and creates a courtyard amenity space, parking and vehicle access. The photographs on the facing page illustrate examples of such spaces that are well designed pedestrian places that also accommodate cars. In this Scenario, a rear lane could be accommodated.

Two scenarios are illustrated. **Scenario C** shows a low-rise building and **Scenario D** shows a mid-rise building. Both would incorporate parking in a structure. The building fronting Arnold is a street townhouse to provide a transition to the adjacent single detached residences.



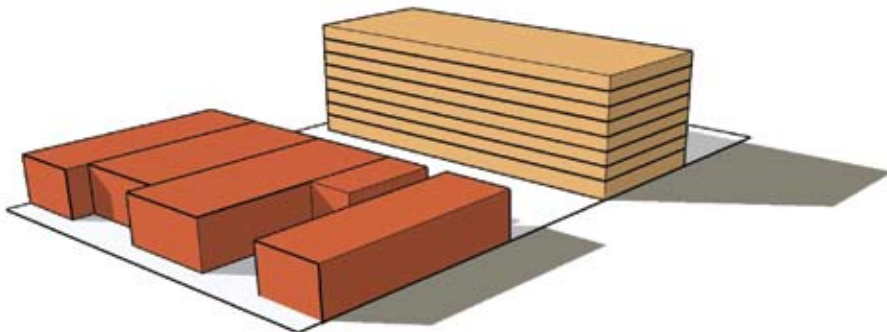
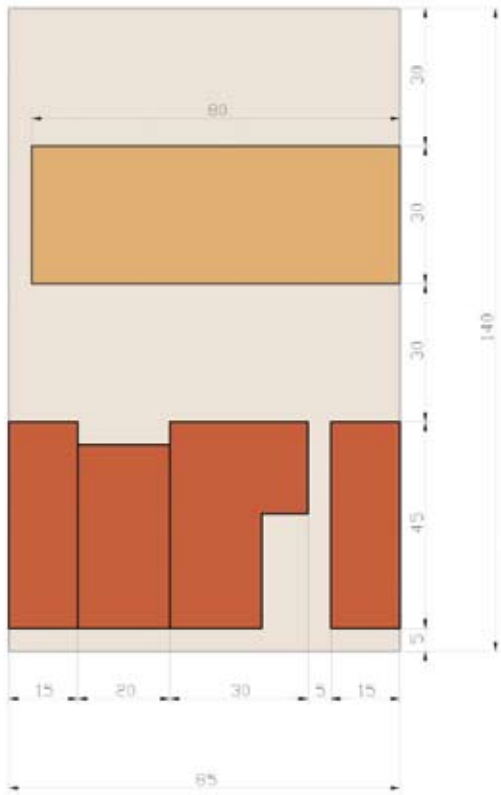
Existing conditions



Scenario C



Scenario D



Scenario D

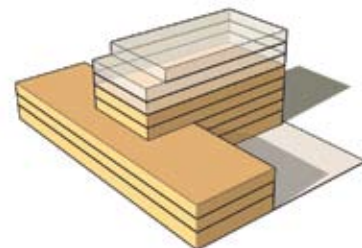
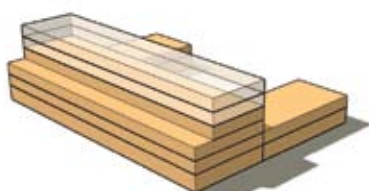
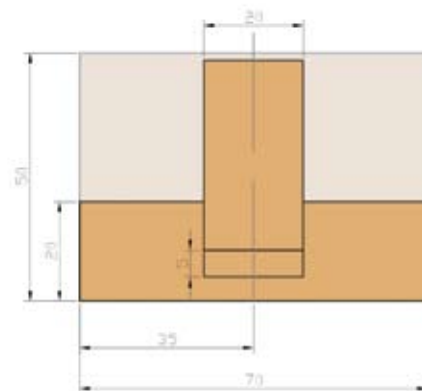
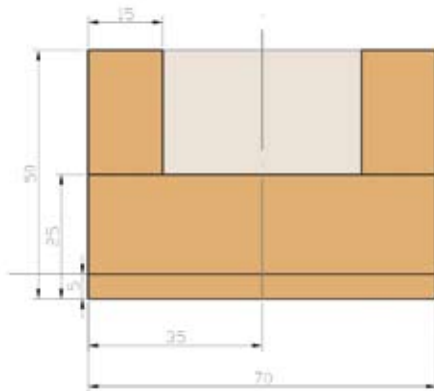


Potential Courtyard building prototypes



3. Village District - Demonstration Site #3: Site to be redeveloped

There are some sites that could be redeveloped. The Demonstration Plan illustrates redevelopment on the east side of Yonge street south of Lorne Avenue. Both scenarios illustrate a base building of three storeys parallel to the street, set back slightly from the edge of the right-of-way due to the context of the heritage buildings to the south of the site. In **Scenario E**, additional height is accommodated perpendicular to the street. In **Scenario F**, additional height is parallel to Yonge Street. Parking would be accommodated in a below-grade structure and access would be provided off of a rear lane.



Scenario E

Scenario F



Demonstration Plan - Through Lot



Tridel Development - Rendering

4. Village District - Demonstration Site #4: Through lot development

This building type reflects the built form that results when new development occurs on a lot that extends from Yonge Street through the block to the adjacent street. The issues related to this condition result from the potential for development to front on two streets, each with different conditions, as well as the potential to build a larger building due to the size of the lot.

The Demonstration Plan includes the new Tridel development, which provides an example of a through block condition.

Where the lot faces Yonge Street, the built form conditions are the same as elsewhere on the street. The building is three storeys in height and then steps back to meet a 45° angular plane. The condition on the adjacent street is a result of the single-family homes that face onto it. The building is limited to three storeys in height where the lot abuts the street and then steps back. The angular plane, in this case, is 30° and is measured from the property line on the far side of the street. The bulk of the building is located at the centre of the site to reduce its impact on both streets.



Public Realm Framework

3.0 Public Realm Framework

The Public Realm Framework is the general plan that defines and guides the Strategy with respect to the elements that are primarily in public ownership, such as parks, streets and open spaces around schools, community facilities and elements that are in private ownership but are publicly accessible such as parkettes and church lawns.

The quality of the public realm creates a lasting impression of an urban area. Parks parkettes, urban squares and beautiful streets all help to attract new investment, add value to existing buildings and are a critical amenity for residents and workers in the area.

Downtown Richmond Hill has a number of large open spaces that include the cemetery behind the Presbyterian Church south of Arnold Crescent that connects with the open space around the McConaghy Seniors Centre and the outdoor space at the Library. In addition there is Ransom Park and a planned park on part of the closed Palmer Avenue right-of-way. Several open spaces about the edge of Downtown Richmond Hill including the Elgin Barrow Arena and the adjacent park with playground equipment and sports fields, Mount Pleasant Park (with playground equipment, basketball and tennis) near the Aquatic Centre and the Heritage Centre Museum.

Downtown Richmond Hill is well served with community facilities including the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, a library, aquatic centre, Elgin Barrow Arena and the McConaghy Seniors Centre. There are also a number of schools located in the Downtown area. These public spaces and facilities provide important amenities and serve as destinations for residents across Richmond Hill.



Public Realm Concept

Key Direction

The intent of the Public Realm Framework is to establish a legible, coherent and appealing physical environment and to contribute to the revitalization and animation of the Downtown by identifying and coordinating aspects of the public realm for improvement. The implementation of recommendations will contribute to the revitalization of Downtown Richmond Hill.

The Public Realm Framework identifies:

- urban squares, parkettes and church lawns, as well as existing parks in proximity to Downtown;
- gateways, key views and sites for landmarks;
- locations for courtyards and mews; and,
- streetscape hierarchy.

Recommendations

1. The Public Realm Framework should be used to guide decisions with respect to detailed design and capital improvement. The public realm is highlighted on the Demonstration Plan. Recommendations with respect to each component of the Public Realm Framework follows.



Demonstration Plan - Public Realm Plan

3.1 Urban Squares, Church Greens, Parks and Parkettes

Key Direction

The Strategy is to develop a series of green and paved gathering spaces at regular intervals along Yonge Street to create a rich grain of intimate public spaces - places for cafes, urban squares, and gardens. This series of green and paved spaces creates a continuous network of experiences for the pedestrian, creating visual and physical linkages along the entire length of Yonge Street through the Downtown.

Urban Squares

Recommendations

1. The **Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts** has been designed to include an urban square at the front entrance off of Yonge Street. This space is a hard surface that will function as a gathering space and serve as an outdoor forecourt to the building. This space anchors the north end of Downtown.
2. A new **urban square** could be created by extending special paving from building edge to building edge at the intersection of Centre Street East and Yonge Street. The United Church anchors this corner. Centre Street East could be closed for special occasions, offering a perfect location for outdoor events in the centre of the Downtown. This could be an extension of the suggestions for Ransom Park (see parkettes).
3. A new **urban square** should be established in the south west corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and Yonge Street in association with a possible new Town Hall. By setting buildings back from the corner, views of the church steeples will remain prominent. This is also an important site for public art to mark this special location. It is ideally suited to a hard surface space.



Location of the three civic squares



Theatre Square at the Centre for the Performing Arts



South Churches

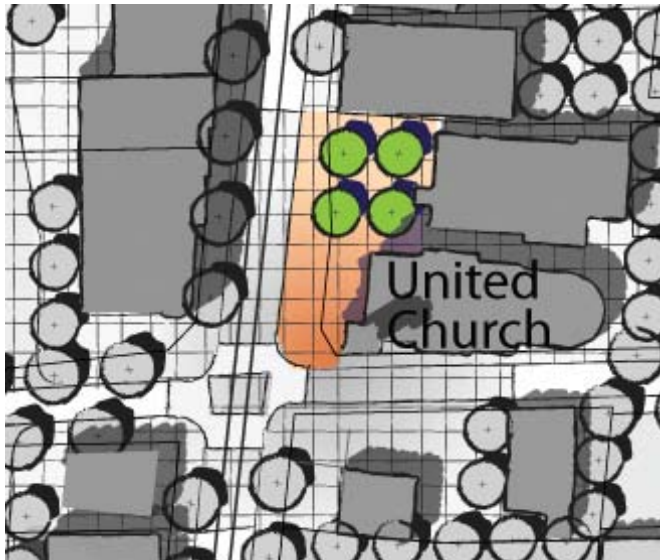
Church Greens

Recommendations

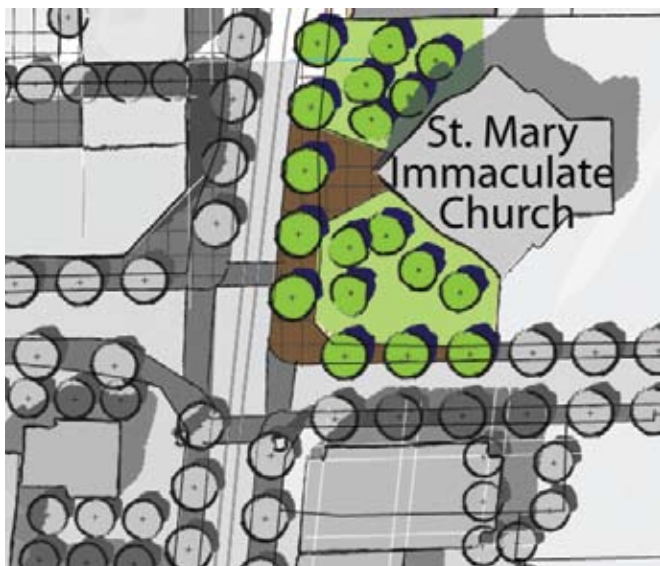
1. There are four churches on Yonge Street with extensive landscaped frontages. These passive green spaces are important open spaces in Downtown Richmond Hill, especially in the areas with limited sidewalks.

The church greens should be protected and the landscape treatment should continue to be integrated with the streetscape design. Public use of these greens should continue to be encouraged through, for example, the addition of benches that could be provided by the Town. Temporary and/ or fixed barriers to access should be removed.

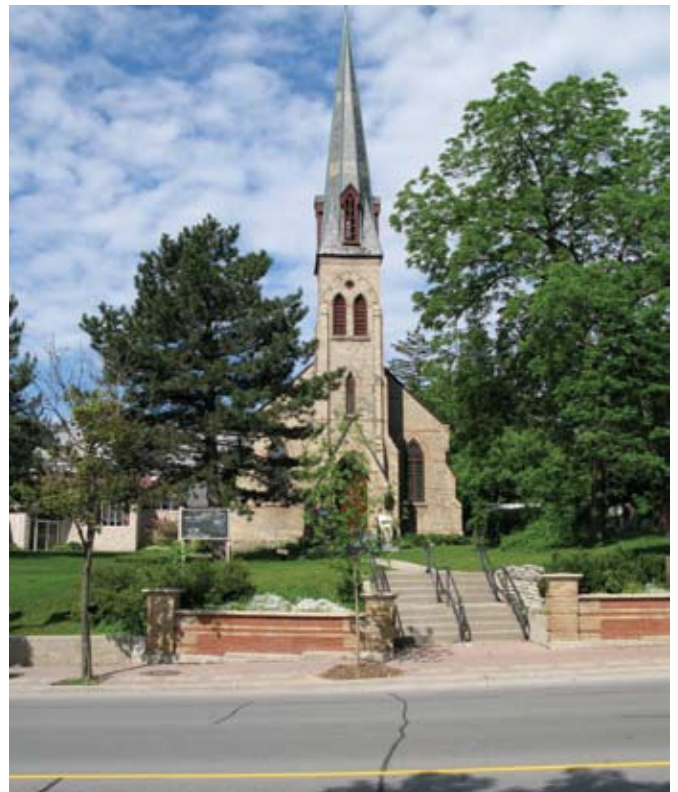
2. The forecourt at the United Church could have a hard surface to integrate it with the Urban Square described in the previous section.



United Church



St. Mary Immaculate Church



Existing conditions: Church green along Yonge Street in Downtown Richmond Hill

Parks and Parkettes

Recommendations

1. **Ransom Park** is located just south of Centre Street, in the centre of Downtown Richmond Hill. In 1995, the Town transformed the site of a hydro substation into a new park to provide a respite on Yonge Street. The park is ideally located to become the focus of possible redevelopment. The photo montage on the facing page demonstrates the change with redevelopment on the abutting property that reveals the facade of the heritage building, infill residential development behind the park and mixed use development on Yonge Street to define and frame the south edge of the park. By extending streetscape treatment along the front of the newly exposed heritage building to the north and across the street to the church, the new market square could be created.
2. The front of the **McConaghy Seniors Centre** provides an existing outdoor space along Yonge Street. It is well designed with landscape treatment and pedestrian amenities and should continue to be maintained for such purposes in the future.
3. The front of the **Elgin Barrow Arena** provides an important green space for Downtown Richmond Hill and the neighbourhood. This area includes playground equipment and seating. This Strategy supports the intention of the Town to undertake a master plan for the Arena in the future to enhance the outdoor space, in particular the west frontage on Church Street.
4. A new park is planned for the closed Palmer Avenue right-of-way, just north of Harding Boulevard at the south end of the Study Area. This park will provide a public green space in the Civic District and a focus for adjacent high density development.
5. An extension of **Kozak Park** in the north east corner of the Study Area is planned. It will provide a transition from the higher density development on Yonge Street to the adjacent residential neighbourhood. The new development should include a wide and clear public route from Yonge Street through to Kozak Park which will provide a green connection with Yonge Street.
6. The Public Realm Plan illustrates new high density mixed-use development on Yonge Street. An important principle in the Strategy is the creation of publicly accessible parkettes. The Demonstration Plan illustrates green space in the interior of the blocks on the west side of Yonge at the south end, and adjacent to new higher density buildings throughout



Location of parks and parkettes

Downtown. These spaces would be developed and maintained by the private sector, but would be publicly accessible. Designed and programmed well, they can become important social and gathering spaces in higher density mixed use developments.



Pentagon Row - Washington D.C.



Pentagon Row - Washington D.C.



Bryant Park - New York City



Paley Park - New York City



Cloud Gardens - Toronto



Market Square and Ransom Park: Existing conditions



Market Square and Ransom Park: Potential redevelopment scenario

3.2 Gateways & Landmarks

Key Direction

Gateways and Landmarks provide an opportunity to enhance the sense of place and orientation in Downtown Richmond Hill. The Strategy defines Downtown Gateways as highly visible locations that serve to mark the entry to Downtown Richmond Hill. Village Gateways serve to mark entry into the Village District. Landmarks are existing buildings (such as the churches), or sites where new buildings or public art could be used to terminate the views.

Recommendations

1. Several buildings have been identified as **landmark buildings** including the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, the churches, Central Library and the McConaghy Seniors Centre. These buildings stand out from the others in the area by virtue of their location, height, size, design and use. These buildings are important destinations.

Churches are also important landmark buildings and views to the church spires must be protected. The Strategy supports the Town's current requirement for view plane analysis for development applications in Downtown Richmond Hill.

2. Sites at the Downtown Gateways and Village Gateways should be carefully considered in order to ensure high quality and coordinated design of landscapes, signage and public art. Prominent building design should create a sense of entry and orientation.
3. 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. The map on this page identifies terminus views (directed views to a particular location) and sites that could be the site of special buildings or public art to enhance civic design, orientation and visual and physical connectivity.



Gateways and Landmarks



Gateway building treatment with lighting element



Landscape gateway treatment



Landmark building that terminates a view

- 5. Sites for public art are located on the Public Realm Framework in locations that have or could have important public/civic uses including: Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts, Ransom Park, McConaghy Seniors Centre, Elgin Barrow Arena, the possible new Town Hall and the park at the end of the Palmer Avenue right-of-way at Yonge Street.

Public art is art created by artists, or in collaboration with artists, on publicly accessible property. Public art can be permanent or temporary, functional or aesthetic, site specific, integrated, semi-integrated or discrete. Examples of public art include sculptures, murals, fountains, street furnishings, park amenities, light works, live art, artists' collaborations on architecture, landscape architecture or amenity design. Public art creates a unique place, a destination, a focal point for activity and a landmark. The Town should prepare a public art master plan for Downtown Richmond Hill.



Examples of public art

3.3 Courtyards and Mews

Key Direction

An opportunity exists through applications for new development to create a special design condition within the existing parking areas at the rear of buildings fronting Yonge Street in the Village District.

Existing and future parking areas provide an opportunity for landscape treatment and special paving to create a series of courtyards. A courtyard is a space enclosed by a building, open to the sky. As described in the Land Use and Urban Design Framework, by fronting buildings or creating a second face to the existing buildings along Yonge Street, these courtyards will not only maintain their function for parking, but also provide areas for spill out activity such as patios associated with restaurants. These courtyards should be accessed from side streets and local streets. As these parking courtyards are developed over time, an informal continuous laneway system may be created. These courtyards can provide an appealing focus and environment for the intensification of rear lots. They would be accessed off of side streets.

There is also an opportunity to create small sites for a pedestrian mews along Yonge Street with modest setbacks of buildings. The sidewalk is narrow through the Village and a widened sidewalk or pedestrian mews, could be created in some areas by setting back buildings from the streetwall in specific conditions, such as adjacent to heritage buildings, to provide landscaped seating areas.

Recommendations

1. The Town should protect for a linked system of courtyards that can be achieved over time as redevelopment occurs. This Strategy identifies the location of courtyards conceptually.
2. The courtyards are dual use spaces for pedestrians and cars and, as such, should be coordinated with the potential off street pedestrian connections described in the next section.
3. The system of courtyard spaces should be treated in a manner similar to the streetscape and, as such, should have a coordinated palette of paving, lighting, planting and signage.



Demonstration plan



Toronto - Small intimate laneways in Yorkville provide opportunities for spill out activity that animates the space



Toronto - primarily pedestrian spaces in the Distillery District



Amsterdam Woonerf



Vancouver - Granville Island laneway shared by pedestrians and automobiles



Streetscape Hierarchy

3.4 Streetscape Hierarchy

Key Direction

Streets comprise the most significant land area in public ownership and are the primary way in which people experience a place. More than a road, a streetscape defines and considers all of the elements that combine to create the quality and character of the room that contains the street: sidewalks, trees, lighting, furnishing, signage and the character and quality of the buildings that define the street wall.

Given that a culture of walking is fundamental to achieving a successful downtown, streetscapes must be designed to balance pedestrian, cycling, transit, land use and civic functions, in addition to the movement of cars.

The intent of the streetscape hierarchy is to identify the conditions of use, built form, and streetscape required to create beautiful streets. Cross sections on the following pages illustrate the general intended character and will serve as a guide for detailed streetscape design.

Recommendations

1. Yonge Street has a 20m wide right-of-way with 2 lanes in each direction through the Village. The outside lanes in each direction revert to on-street parking in off-peak hours. South of Major Mackenzie Drive, Yonge Street will have 45 metres right-of-way and north of Bedford Park Avenue, Yonge Street has a 33m right-of-way.

Yonge Street is envisioned as the primary street framed by buildings along its length through Downtown Richmond Hill. As the major street that links all three distinct districts, the streetscape treatment will serve to unify the entire Downtown. The streetscape treatment illustrated on the cross sections that follow anticipates high order transit.

2. Major Mackenzie Drive is an important east-west link through the Downtown. It is a route for transit, pedestrians, cyclists, as well as cars. The built form and streetscape character will shape the image of the Civic District.
3. Transition Streets run east or west from Yonge Street and link with the adjacent residential areas. The streetscape, built form and uses along Transition Streets will need to provide a sensitive transition to residential neighbourhoods. Some of the Transition Streets also provide links to nearby parks and open spaces and are identified as Green Street Connections.

4. Interface Streets are north-south streets between the Downtown study area and the adjacent residential neighbourhoods. Interface streets are Church, Elizabeth and Hall. Interface streets are both the local streets to neighbourhoods and access to what could be higher density uses. Streetscape treatment will be integrated with the existing street trees on residential streets.
5. Green street connections should have a continuous street tree planting and sidewalks as they provide links to nearby parks.

Yonge Street

Yonge Street - Uptown

- Street edge buildings with base buildings up to 6 storeys above which there is a step back
- BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) is in a shared curb lane
- Two vehicle travel lanes in each direction
- On street (off-peak) parking
- Shared curb lane for bicycles
- North of Crosby Avenue a dedicated bike lane is accommodated in the right-of-way
- Curb side trees in a continuous planting trench
- 1.5m planting zone
- 2.0m wide sidewalk
- 1.5m wide zone along the frontage for cafes, displays, additional sidewalk or planting
- The pavement is marked at all intersecting streets to define pedestrian cross walks



Uptown - existing conditions



Uptown - location of cross section



Uptown - cross section



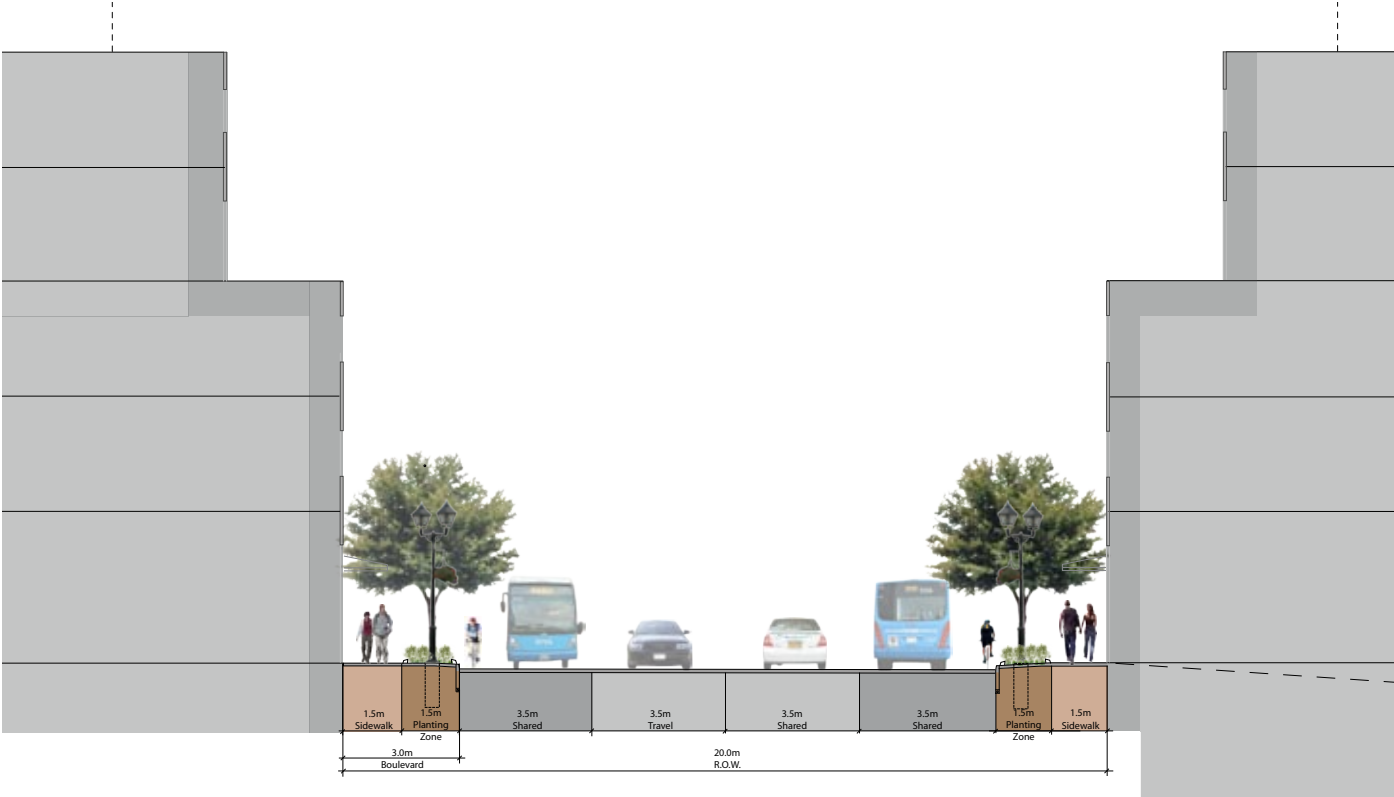
The Village - location of cross section

Yonge Street - The Village

- Street edge buildings with base buildings up to 3 storeys above which there is a step back
- BRT is in a shared curb side lane
- Curb side trees in a continuous 1.5m planting trench
- Two vehicle travel lanes in each direction
- 2.0m wide sidewalk
- In some locations, buildings set back up to 2m to create small mews along the street
- The pavement is marked at all intersecting streets to define pedestrian cross walks
- On-street parking in off peak hours
- Shared curb lane for bicycles with bike route signage



The Village - existing conditions



The Village - cross section

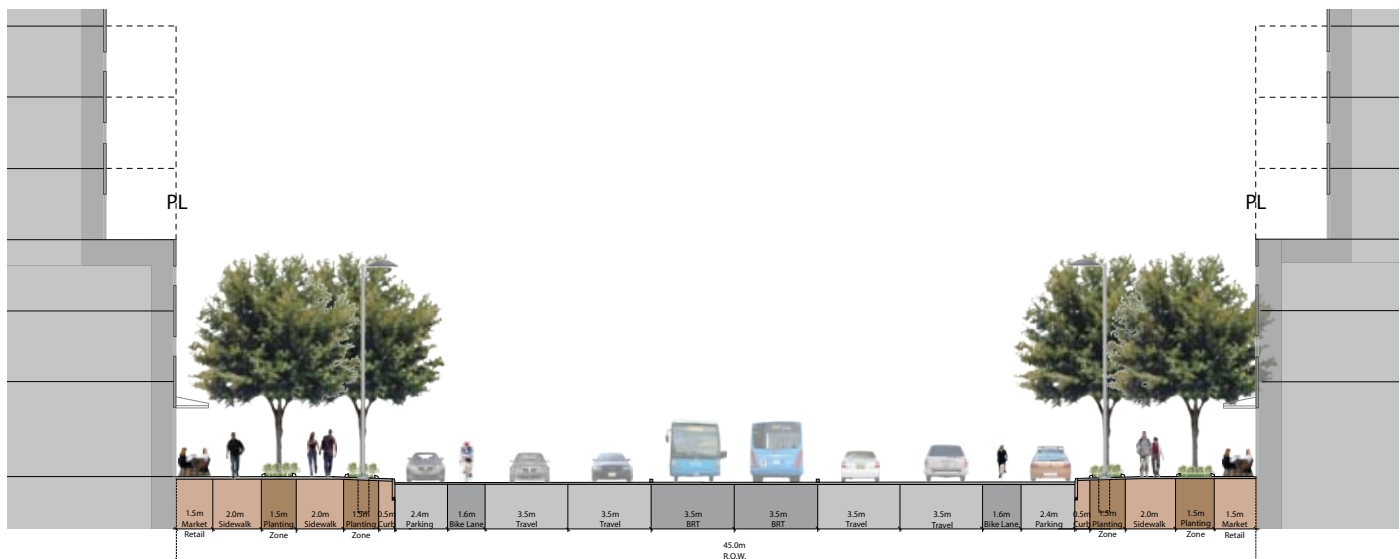
Yonge Street - Civic

- Street edge buildings with base buildings up to 6 storeys above which there is a step back
- BRT is located in dedicated lanes in the centre of the right-of-way. At the south end, there is a planted median in the BRT corridor
- Two vehicle travel lanes in each direction
- On street parking (in off-peak hours)
- Dedicated bike lane
- Curb side trees in a continuous 1.5m planting trench
- 2m wide sidewalk
- West side of the street could have a double row of trees that defines the sidewalk. Additional tree is on private property
- Double row of street trees on the east side where building entrances are set back, otherwise, single row of street trees
- The pavement is marked at all intersecting streets to define pedestrian cross walks



Civic Centre District - existing conditions

Civic Centre District - location of cross section



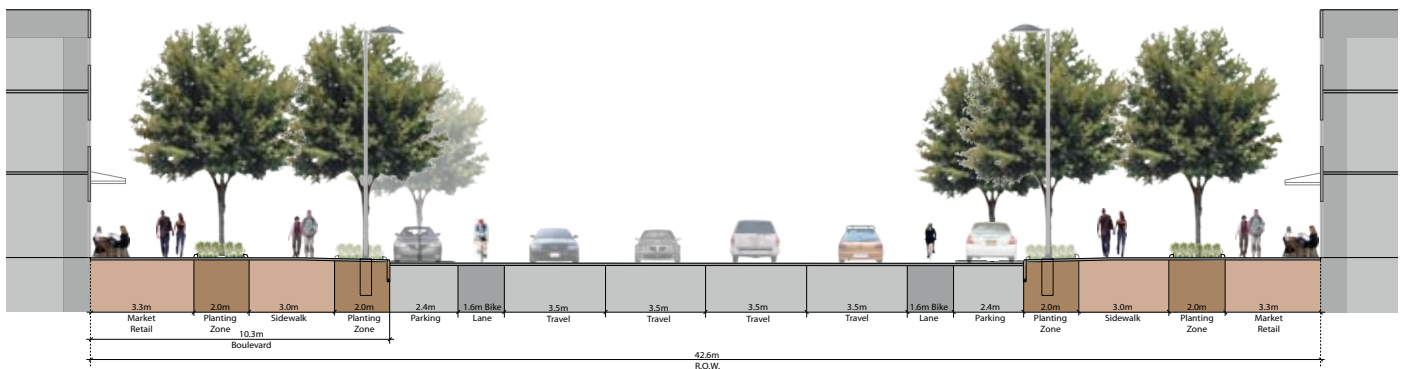
Civic Centre District - cross section



Major Mackenzie Drive - location of cross section

Major Mackenzie Drive East/West

- Transit travels in outside shared travel lane
- Two vehicle travel lanes in each direction
- On street parking could be defined along Major Mackenzie West with sidewalk bump outs where an additional tree could be planted
- Dedicated on street bike lane west of Yonge Street. East of Yonge Street bikes are accommodated in a shared travel lane
- Streetscape treatment serves as an important gateway from the east and west approaches into the Downtown
- Double rows of trees planted in 2m wide planting bed within right-of-way
- Street trees define a 2m wide sidewalk
- 2m wide area at the building edge for displays, seating or additional planting
- Street furniture and planting will be similar to that on Yonge Street to provide visual linkages



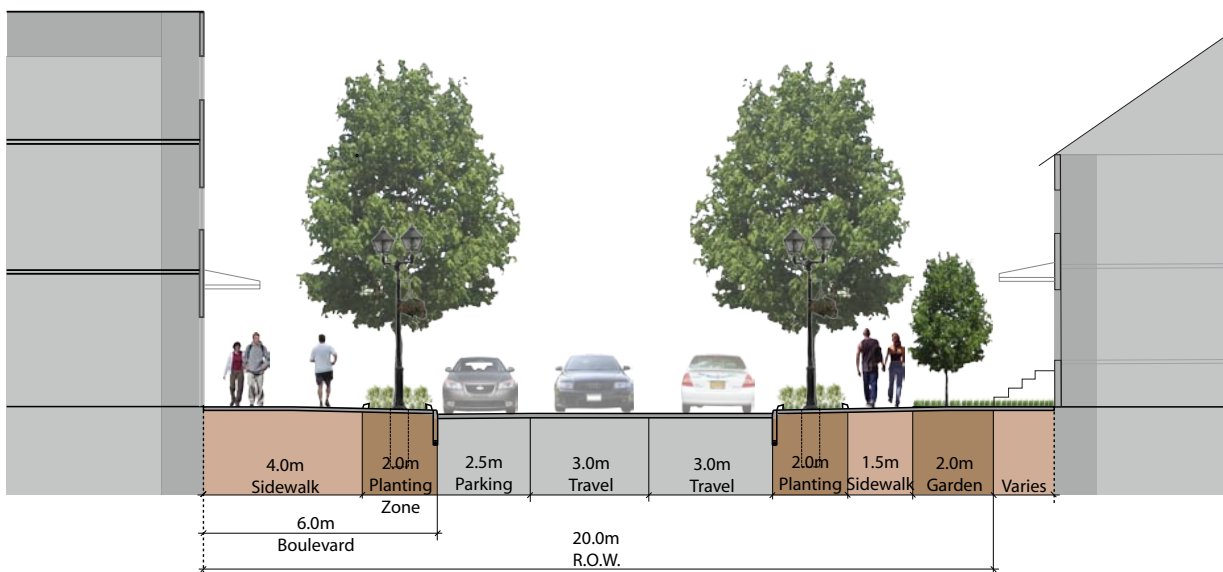
Major Mackenzie Drive - cross section

Transition Streets

- Two travel lanes in each direction
- Could accommodate on-street parking on one side
- Street tree planting in a 2m wide grass boulevard at the curb side
- 2m wide garden with tree planting if adjacent to residential uses
- Continuous sidewalk to the building in buildings with ground floor commercial/office



Transition Street - location of cross section



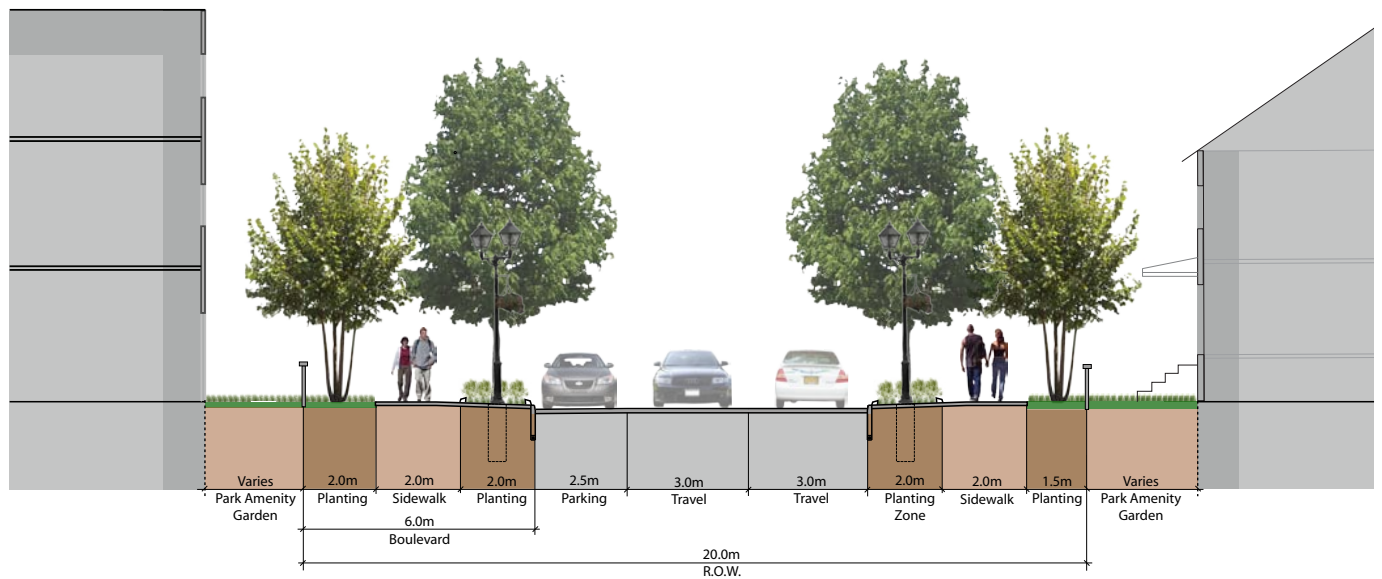
Transition Street - cross section



Interface Street - location of cross section

Interface Streets

- Two travel lanes in each direction
- On street parking on one side
- Continuous sidewalk
- Planting zone at the edge of the right-of-way with a tree to integrate with front yard landscape
- Street tree planting in a 2m wide grass boulevard at the curb side



Interface Street - cross section

4

HEART OF RICHMOND HILL 
DOWNTOWN DESIGN & LAND USE STRATEGY

C i r c u l a t i o n

4.0 Circulation

Key Direction

Downtown Richmond Hill is envisioned as a pedestrian oriented, compact and mixed use environment. Parking demand is typically reduced with the provision of higher order transit and improved cycling and pedestrian routes. This Strategy advocates that parking be located and designed to ensure a diverse, thriving, pedestrian friendly place.

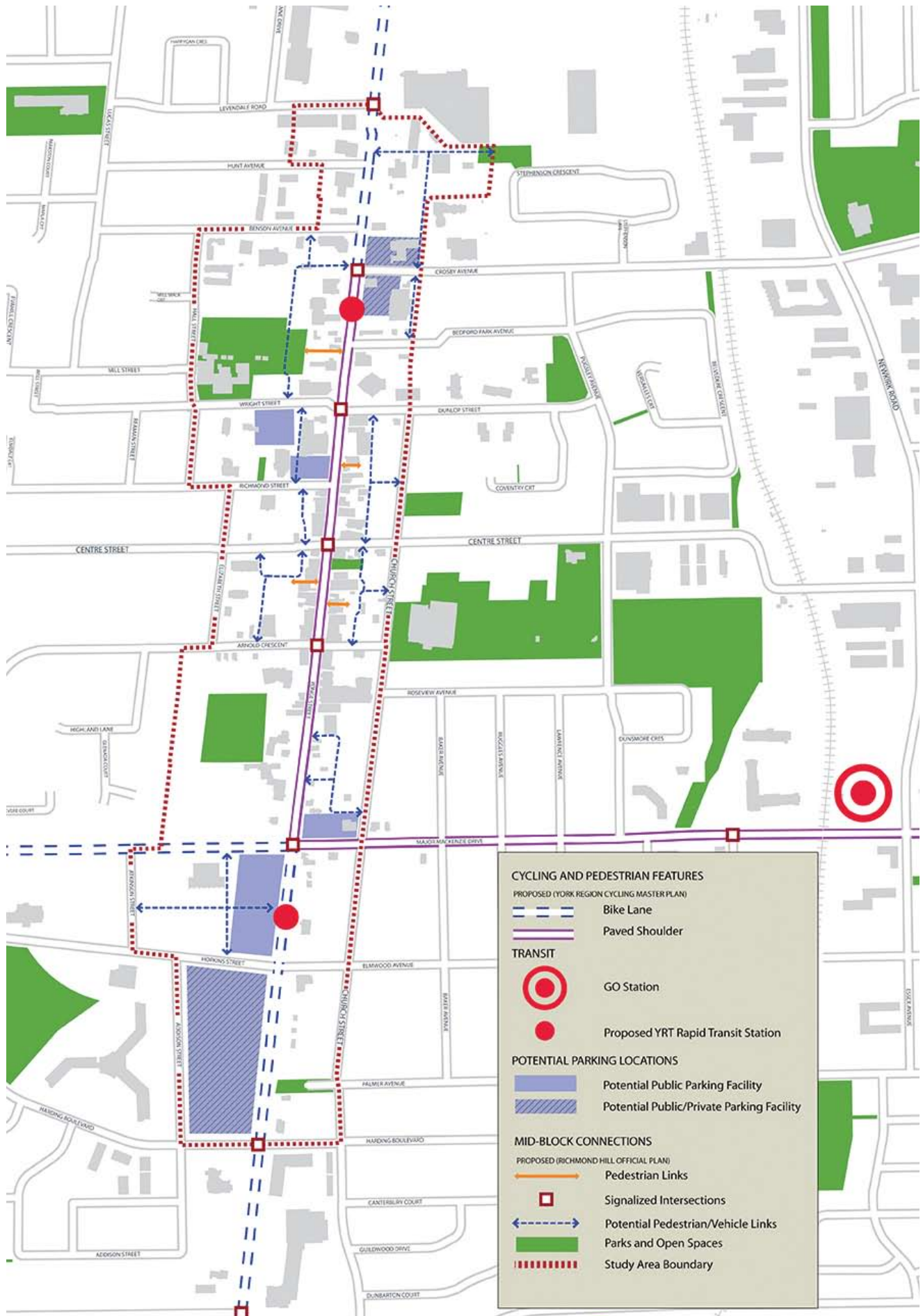
Outdoor pedestrian places are very limited in the Village District. Therefore, all areas currently used as rear service or lanes should be considered as multi-functional places for pedestrians first, as well as vehicles.

The principle means of access to Downtown Richmond Hill will be by public transit or active transportation. The Town of Richmond Hill recognizes that improved access by non-automotive modes of travel reduces the need for parking, improving the public realm and making more space available for development, parks, and pedestrian facilities and amenities.

The diagram on the facing page illustrates the components of the framework for circulation, including:

- cycling and pedestrian connections,
- transit; and,
- parking and servicing.

The following sections describe the recommendations for each of the components which should be used to guide their detailed planning and design.



Circulation Framework

4.1 Pedestrian and Cycling Connections



Modest set back for seating



Examples of pedestrian connections

Key Direction

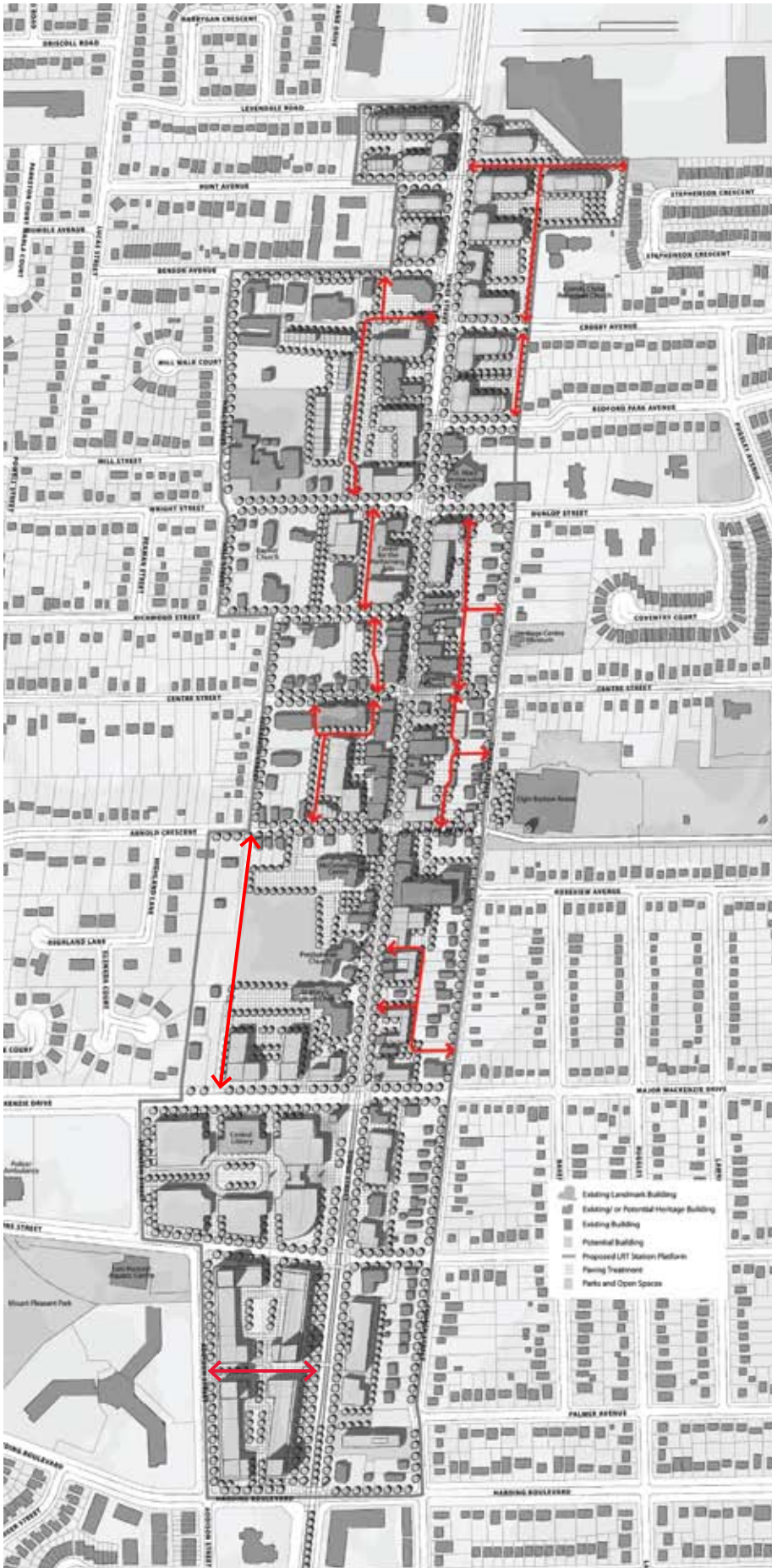
Downtown Richmond Hill should continue to have, and plan for, a well connected system of pedestrian and cycling connections that connect key destinations.

Recommendations

1. Downtown Richmond Hill is well served with sidewalks, albeit, some are narrow. Redevelopment in the Uptown and Civic Districts will provide for wider sidewalks as discussed in the Public Realm Framework. Through the Village District, there may be locations where modest setbacks in the location of buildings from the streetwall, could provide for pedestrian mews along Yonge Street.

As described in the Land Use and Urban Design Framework, ground floor uses in buildings that line the sidewalk should enliven the pedestrian zone with interest and activity.

2. In the Village District, several mid-block pedestrian links connect Yonge Street with the areas behind the properties on both the east and west sides. Other mid-block pedestrian connections are shown on the Circulation Framework.
3. As discussed in the previous section, there is an opportunity to create a connected system of courtyards to enhance circulation for both pedestrians and vehicles. The diagram on the facing page locates the possible connections. These are envisioned as pedestrian places that vehicles can travel in, not simply as rear service lanes. As these are not envisioned to become a through-route for vehicles, they can be 2-way without compromising pedestrian safety. They could be publicly accessible, private routes or public.
4. Bicycle lanes and cycling facilities are proposed along Yonge Street south of Major Mackenzie Drive and along Major Mackenzie Drive west of Yonge Street. In other locations, bikes would be accommodated in mixed travel lanes. Bike racks should be provided throughout Downtown Richmond Hill. The Town is currently undertaking a Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan to be completed in 2009.
5. The planning of pedestrian and bicycle connections shall comply with the York Region Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (2008).
6. Adequate and sheltered public bicycle parking should be provided for residents and employees within residential buildings, commercial buildings, and transit stations. Bicycle parking should also be provided at the appropriate locations along Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive in the study area.



Potential pedestrian and vehicle connections



Examples of pedestrian places

4.2 Public Transit

Key Direction

Downtown is well served by local and regional transit. The Newkirk GO Train Station provides connections to Downtown Toronto. VIVA and York Region Transit provide connections with the Yonge-University-Spadina subway line and surrounding areas. There is a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along Yonge Street through the Downtown planned for operation by 2009. BRT will travel in dedicated lanes outside of the Village. Through the Village, the BRT will travel in mixed traffic. Bus Rapid Transit is also planned on Major Mackenzie with the potential for a future dedicated transitway as recommended in the York Region Transportation Master Plan Update. A station is proposed near Yonge Street.

Two rapid transit stations are proposed for Yonge Street in Downtown Richmond Hill: a new one at Hopkins Street and the existing one at Crosby Avenue. With these stations, most of Downtown is within a 5 minute walk of transit. There is a direct relationship between transit ridership and distance from the station. Numerous empirical studies have found that the maximum ridership capture potential is achieved from development that is within a relatively short walking distance, typically measured in terms of a five minute walk or approximately 400m. There is also a strong correlation between density and transit ridership - generally, the higher the density, the higher the transit ridership potential.



400m walking radius around proposed transit stations

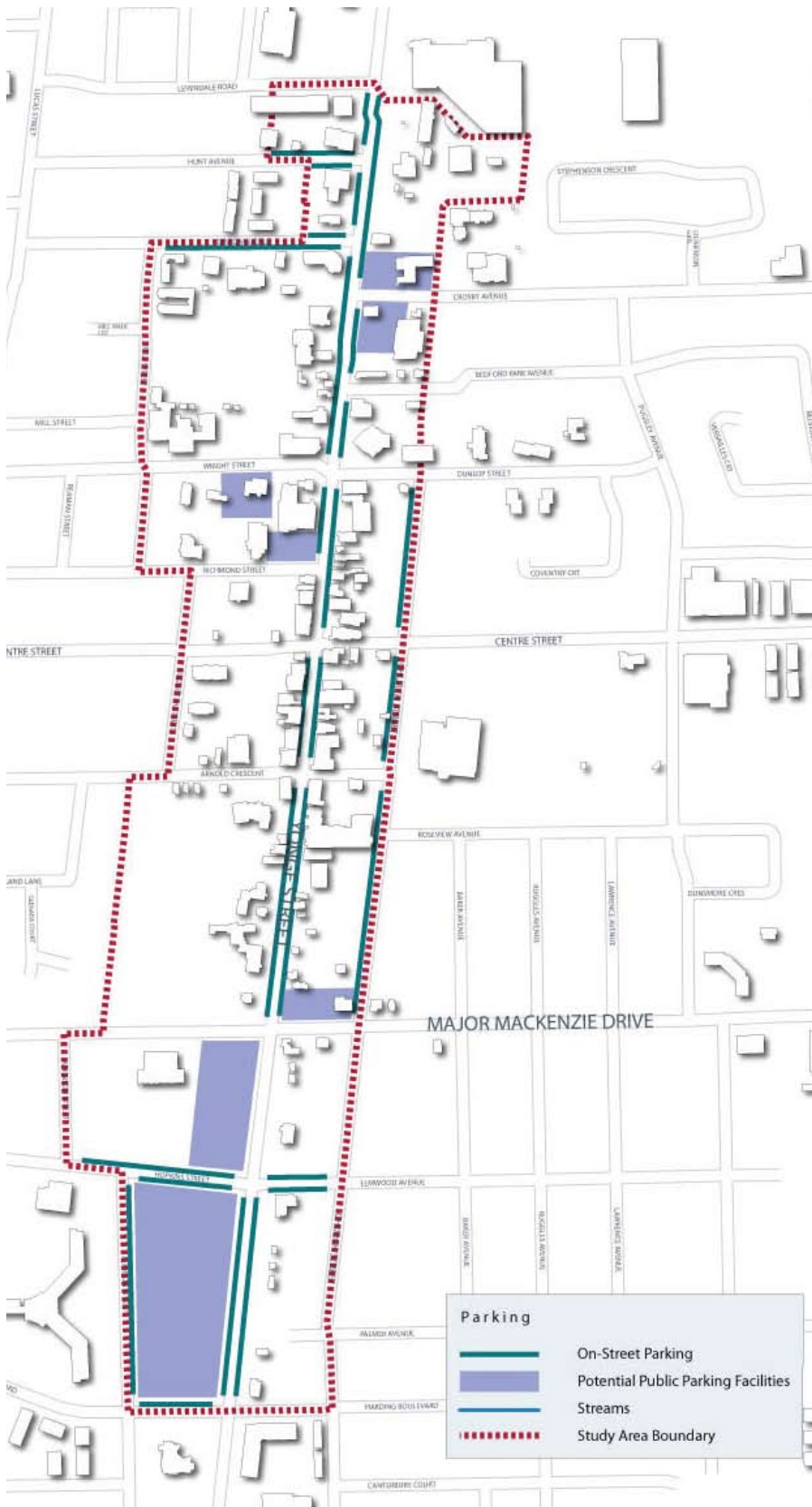
Recommendations

1. This Strategy supports transit through intensification. As described in the Land Use and Urban Design Framework, development will support transit with:
 - a mix of uses including employment to draw peak ridership in the morning and afternoon and destination uses such as retail, restaurants, cultural venues and entertainment uses.
 - transit-oriented design considerations that require buildings to be located at the edge of the right-of-way with ground floor uses that enliven the pedestrian zone on the sidewalk.
2. Streets will encourage walking and cycling, and amenities such as well designed transit shelters and conveniently located cycling facilities to encourage transit use. Each transit trip begins and ends on foot and therefore, special attention needs to be paid to the pedestrian network adjacent to the BRT stations.



Transit stops and shelters. Cleveland, Ohio

4.3 Parking & Servicing



Key Direction

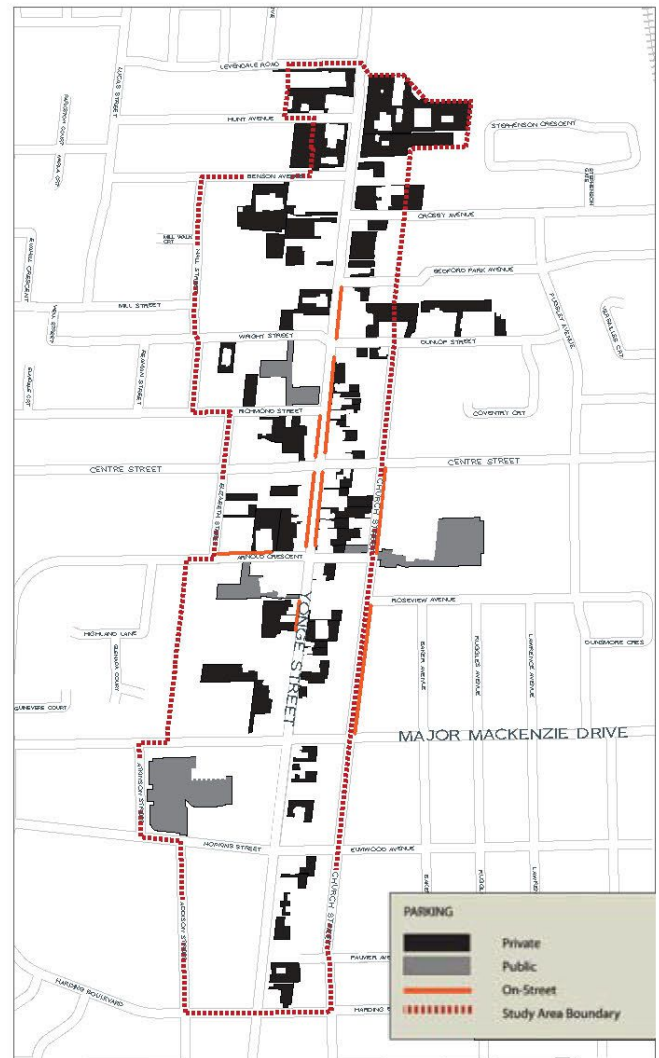
It is important to balance the supply of parking in concert with redevelopment through a comprehensive approach to planning and urban design. Downtown presents a special mix of uses, amenities and densities not found elsewhere in the municipality. It requires a special approach to the provision of parking that, while meeting the needs of motorists, sustains and enhances the vision for Downtown Richmond Hill. Parking demand is typically reduced with the provision of high order transit and improved cycling and pedestrian routes. These are all important aspects of this Strategy. The valuable role parking plays in a strong downtown is not questioned, but this Strategy advocates that parking be planned, designed and located to create a diverse, thriving, pedestrian friendly area. Properly located, designed and signed parking that offers choice to motorists will augment the function of Downtown and will not result in the visual blight that often results from large surface parking lots.



Public parking structure with ground floor uses or shared use in a residential condo development

Recommendations

1. A comprehensive parking strategy should be completed to examine methods of increasing the capacity and efficiency of existing parking through for example, sharing of off-street parking, improved information on the location of parking, controls on parking (cost and/or time), the establishment of a parking authority, and signage.
2. New parking will be provided in future developments. The diagram on the facing page illustrates the location for potential parking facilities that could provide both public and private parking.
3. Above grade parking structures should be designed to ensure a visually attractive and active pedestrian environment by incorporating retail, office or residential uses as a veneer or wrap to shield the parking structure from the street.
4. On-street parking in off peak hours should be provided in the locations identified on the map on the facing page.
5. Surface parking and loading areas should be located to the rear of a development and generally not visible from the street.
6. Service and loading areas should be screened from adjacent residential areas to mitigate noise and visual impacts.
7. Direct access to surface parking, service and loading areas from the street should be discouraged.



Existing parking areas



Parking structure behind street facing townhouses

Downtown Richmond Hill has about 2700 parking spaces that include on-street and off-street parking for shop owners and customer/employee parking. The majority of the parking is privately owned and serves individual properties. There are five publicly owned surface parking lots, three of which are located in the Village.

5

HEART OF RICHMOND HILL 
DOWNTOWN DESIGN & LAND USE STRATEGY

Implementation

5.0 Implementation

The previous chapters have described the components of the Design and Land Use Strategy. The Terms of Reference indicate an Implementation Stage in conjunction with the development of the new OP, during which Town staff will prepare the Downtown Secondary Plan and Downtown Zoning By-law based on the Design and Land Use Strategy.

This chapter summarizes the primary recommendations that have evolved over the course of preparing the Design and Land Use Strategy. It is not anticipated that wholesale change will occur in Downtown Richmond Hill over the short term. Rather, the introduction of higher density and mixed use development will evolve as the market responds to the provision of high order transit. Downtown will continue to grow in its appeal of providing much greater choices for transportation, living and working in Richmond Hill.

Successful implementation hinges on three fundamental actions as described below. Research into case study examples of the intensification of centres in communities of all sizes across North America has revealed that these common elements are essential ingredients of success.

1. Establish the environment for change

It is necessary to continue to work at establishing the environment for change to a mixed use, higher density Downtown. The Town already has strong political will for intensification of Downtown Richmond Hill. This sends a clear message to the community that the Town is committed to investing in Downtown Richmond Hill and creates a favourable climate for private sector investment. The vision for Downtown Richmond Hill will be further strengthened with the adoption of this Design and Land Use Strategy and its implementing policy. Typically, there is also a need to invest in public facilities and amenities. In choosing to live Downtown, residents often trade off private space for a diverse array of public amenities and services. The Town of Richmond Hill has a history of investing in Downtown Richmond Hill. There have been many millions of dollars spent on streetscape improvements, the new Centre for the Performing Arts, the library and the McConaghy Seniors Centre. Other public sector partners are also investing in Downtown Richmond Hill with construction of high order transit.

2. Reduce the cost of development

Higher density, urban forms of development in general, cost more than typical suburban development forms. The Town has tools that can be used to reduce the

development costs to private developers and owners, which will increase the likelihood of the achievement of higher density urban development. Methods of reducing the cost of development could include:

- public/private partnerships (for example providing some public parking in private buildings);
- reducing parking standards; and,
- providing financial incentives.

Reduced parking requirements reflect diminished automobile use and greater opportunities for shared parking resulting from increased transit opportunities and ridership. Given the current cost of building parking spaces, particularly structured parking, reducing parking requirements and ensuring that the parking supply reflects the true need of more transit supportive forms of development subsequently reduces the overall cost of development.

Similarly, while recognizing that parkland is an important element in the composition of a healthy and balanced urban environment, reductions in parkland standards can be used to reduce private development costs. Further, opportunities for open space can be augmented through development requirements for publicly accessible private open spaces that provide an important urban amenity, while retaining private ownership.

The reduction of development costs can also be achieved through the provision of financial incentives by updating the Community Improvement Plan and/or through tax incentives/reduced development charges.

3. Reduce the risk of the approvals process

It is also important to reduce the risk for private developers. A private developer wishing to build the type of development envisioned for Downtown Richmond Hill may be more likely to develop if there is more certainty surrounding the planned vision and more certainty surrounding the approval process. The Official Plan Amendment will outline permitted heights, form and possible incentives to reduce some of the risk associated with development. An illustrated Zoning By-law will not only provide the regulatory basis to facilitate the Strategy, but will also provide greater certainty as to the Town's development expectations. Pre-zoning for the desired types and forms of development transfers the risk of the development approvals process to the municipality, in concert with the development industry. The pre-zoning exercise should be land use and built form based and should clarify municipal development objectives.

Further site plan approval would deal with the details of development. This approach would reduce the private sector risk factor.

The following is a summary of the priority actions to implement the Design and Land Use Strategy.

Policy

1. Adoption of the Design and Land Use Strategy is a critical first step in managing positive change. It establishes the framework for future development and investment decisions.

2. The Town has already committed to updating the Secondary Plan and Zoning By-law for Downtown Richmond Hill. Consideration should be given to preparing a highly illustrated Zoning By-law. Consideration should also be given to pre-zoning lands. The Downtown Secondary Plan will be completed in conjunction with the development of the new Official Plan. The Zoning By-law will be prepared once the Official Plan is approved.

3. Official Plan Amendment 33, completed in 1985, is a Community Improvement Policy to set out general policies for the improvement/rehabilitation of downtown Richmond Hill, most of this study area. At the time, the focus was on accessing funding for streetscape improvement. The establishment of incentives by the Municipality through the Community Improvement Plan legislation can be used as a “carrot” to ensure conformity with the Design and Land Use Strategy. The Town already has a number of programs in place. The new Community Improvement Plan should consider the full array of incentives including:

- Redevelopment Tax Rebate Program (offset increases in municipal taxes that are a result of an increase in property assessment due to redevelopment)
- Planning and Development Fees Rebate Program (provides rebates of various municipal application fees)
- Façade Improvement Program (already in place, it promotes the sensitive redesign of existing building facades)
- Study grant program (to offset the costs of required studies)
- Landscape improvement grant program (to enhance landscape treatment)

- Residential loan/grant program (improves existing residential properties and/or converts other buildings to residential use)
- Commercial loan/grant program (to improve existing commercial properties)
- Heritage grant program (already in place to assist with the improvement of heritage buildings)
- Municipal property acquisition/rehabilitation program (to acquire and or rehabilitate properties that are strategically located in partnership with other government agencies, with the private sector, or alone)

4. The Town should ensure its ability to capture a reasonable component of the ‘uplift’ in development potential. The new approach utilizes Section 37 of the Planning Act, which permits increased height and/or density (bonusing) in exchange for the achievement of specified public benefits. This approach is intended to establish clear opportunities for developers to achieve significant development as-of-right, but to allow further negotiations to occur between the Town and developers based on the achievement of community benefits.

5. Review the parkland and design standards to ensure that the existing public parkland is appropriately augmented by well designed urban open spaces, and to provide an opportunity to reduce the cost of private sector development.

6. Require that development applications in Downtown Richmond Hill be submitted within the context of a block plan that would include a detailed analysis of the specific conditions and implications of the application on existing conditions.

7. The Town should monitor the development within the Study Area, and carry out a detailed review of the planning regime and infrastructure requirements every five years, or once the average density within the Study Area has achieved 130 residents and/or employees per hectare, whichever occurs first.

Capital Projects

8. The Town should continue to improve the public realm. Ransom Park, the new urban square at the Centre for the Performing Arts and the landscaped area in front of the McConaghy Seniors Centre are terrific examples of the Town's commitment to the quality of Downtown. The new park on the closed Palmer Avenue right-of-way, as well as enhancement to the park in front of the Elgin Barrow Arena are examples of initiatives that will continue to demonstrate commitment to creating a high quality urban environment.

9. A new Town Hall would be ideally located in the south west corner of Major Mackenzie and Yonge Street. The Town's investment in public facilities Downtown has sent a clear message that they are committed to creating a liveable urban district. A Town Hall could have stimulative effects on private sector development decisions and would provide tremendous public benefit to the Downtown.

Detailed Studies

10. A detailed streetscape plan should be prepared to describe the specific conditions of the right-of-way. This will be particularly important to inform the detailed design of the right-of-way for high order transit.

11. Complete a Heritage Management Strategy outlining the detailed condition, value, and priorities for conservation for all properties with cultural heritage value.

12. A parking strategy should be prepared in advance of the Official Plan. As part of an overall development strategy, the Town must provide appropriate parking standards and related design policies that are consistent with increased transit ridership, greater pedestrian activity and diminished automobile use. The parking strategy should be updated every five years.

13. Complete a public art master plan to establish the policy with respect to the process for selecting public art, appropriate types, possible locations, funding and maintenance.

14. Prepare detailed urban design and architectural control guidelines.

15. Consider holding design competitions for special sites such as a new Town Hall, or the park at Elgin Barrow Arena.

16. The Town should prepare a Sustainability Strategy to guide design and construction in a way that ensures better air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, greater energy efficiency, improved water quality and water efficiency, less solid waste, protection of the urban forest and reduced light pollution.

17. The Town should prepare green roof guidelines.

Governance

18. The Town should continue to support the recently established Village of Richmond Hill Business Improvement Association.

19. Consider establishing a Design Review Panel or Committee to review and make recommendations on development applications to ensure consistency with the Design and Land Use Strategy. The Panel should be comprised of professionals in the disciplines of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. Development applicants and their consultants would be asked to present proposals to the Panel, who would in turn make recommendations to staff.

20. The Town should open a dialogue with the churches and engage them on revitalization to create a co-ordinated public realm strategy that includes the Church greens.

5.1 Suggested Framework of the Land Use Designations

The following table summarizes the planning framework for the land use designations described in Chapter 2 (with the exception of institutional and open space). It sets out the general intent, permitted and prohibited uses, height and setbacks anticipated for each of the major land uses identified.

	Village District		
	Village Centre	Village Transition	Village Neighbourhood
Intent	The Village Centre is intended to allow uses that promote pedestrian activity to create a thriving, vibrant Downtown.	The Village Transition is an area of transition from the uses and form on Yonge Street to the adjacent residential neighbourhood.	The Village Neighbourhood is expected to remain as integrated components of the adjacent residential neighbourhood. There is moderate potential for residential intensification that is compatible with adjacent residential land uses.
Permitted Uses	<p>All forms and scales of retail/entertainment uses; residential apartments; offices; entertainment and recreational uses; institutional uses; public utilities; public parks and public or private urban squares.</p> <p>All buildings shall include retail or commercial uses at grade, with office and/or residential uses on floors above grade.</p>	<p>Single and semi-detached residential uses; townhouse dwellings and low to mid rise apartments; public and private schools; institutional uses; public utilities; public parks and public or private urban squares.</p> <p>In addition home occupations, small scale retail and service commercial, and office uses are permitted if they complement the residential character of the area.</p>	<p>Single and semi-detached residential uses; townhouse dwellings and low rise apartments; institutional uses; public utilities; public parks and public or private urban squares.</p> <p>In addition, home occupations are permitted.</p>
Prohibited Uses	Single and/or semi detached residential dwelling units; townhouse dwellings; any individual retail use with Gross Floor Areas in excess of 2,500 square metres; drive through facilities; industrial and industrial warehouse uses; outdoor storage (except outdoor displays); new or used automobile dealerships; and, gas stations and/or auto repair shops.	All other land uses are specifically prohibited.	All other land uses are specifically prohibited.
Height (refer to height map and subject to the Height Strategy)	<p>3-5 storeys (10-16 m) . In addition the ground floor should have a minimum height of 4 metres.</p> <p>A minimum height of 2 storeys, or 7.5 metres.</p>	3-5 storeys (10-16 m).	3-5 storeys (10-16 m).
Setback	Yonge Street buildings should be located at the property line, with no side yard setbacks. Modest setbacks may be considered depending on specific conditions in the block in response to opportunities for widened pedestrian areas on Yonge Street.	Variable front yard setbacks would be permitted as a transition to the adjacent residential neighbourhood.	Variable front yard setbacks would be permitted. Setbacks should be compatible with those on the abutting property.



Downtown + Civic Districts

Downtown + Civic Districts			
Downtown Centre	Downtown Transition	Downtown Neighbourhood	Civic
<p>Downtown Centre represents an opportunity for substantial urban intensification, in a mixed use or single use built form.</p>	<p>The Downtown Transition is an area of transition from the uses and form on Yonge Street to the adjacent residential neighbourhood.</p>	<p>The Downtown Neighbourhood is expected to remain as integrated components of the adjacent residential neighbourhood. There is moderate potential for residential intensification that is compatible with adjacent residential land uses.</p>	<p>The ideal location for civic, cultural and other institutional land uses.</p>
<p>All forms of multi-unit residential uses; offices; entertainment and recreational uses; institutional uses; public utilities; public parks and public or private urban squares.</p> <p>In addition, retail uses are required at grade in buildings that include office and/or residential uses on floors above grade located on Yonge Street in the Uptown District.</p>	<p>Single and semi-detached residential uses; townhouse dwellings and low rise apartments; institutional uses; public utilities; public parks and public or private urban squares.</p> <p>In addition home occupations, small scale retail and service commercial, and office uses are permitted.</p>	<p>Single and semi-detached residential uses; townhouse dwellings and all forms of multi unit residential; public and private schools; institutional uses; public utilities; public parks and public or private urban squares.</p> <p>In addition, home occupations are permitted.</p>	<p>Offices; institutional uses; public utilities; public parks and public or private urban squares; and retail uses that serve the nearby users.</p>
<p>Single and/or semi detached residential dwelling units; stand alone large format retail uses with Gross Floor Areas in excess of 5,000 square metres; drive through facilities; industrial and industrial warehouse uses; outdoor storage; new or used automobile dealerships; and, gas stations and/or auto repair shops.</p>	<p>All other land uses are specifically prohibited.</p>	<p>All other land uses are specifically prohibited.</p>	<p>Single and/or semi detached residential dwelling units; townhouse dwellings; individual large format retail uses with Gross Floor Areas in excess of 5,000 square metres; drive through restaurants, or any other drive through facility; industrial and industrial warehouse uses; out door storage; new or used automobile dealerships; and, gas stations and/or auto repair shops.</p>
<p>6-15 storeys (18-46 m). In addition, the ground floor should have a minimum height of 4 metres.</p> <p>A minimum height of 4 storeys (12 metres).</p>	<p>6-15 storeys (18-46 m). In addition, the ground floor should have a minimum height of 4 metres.</p>	<p>3-15 storeys (9-46 m). In addition, the ground floor should have a minimum height of 4 metres.</p> <p>Buildings should transition between areas of differing scale and intensity</p>	<p>A minimum height of 4 storeys (12 metres).</p>
<p>Yonge Street buildings should be located at the property line, with no side yard setbacks.</p> <p>For lands south of Hopkins St, a setback of 12m on the west side of Yonge St. should be provided to protect the views of the church spires and provide for a promenade condition to the Civic District</p>	<p>Variable front yard setbacks would be permitted as a transition to the adjacent residential neighbourhood.</p>	<p>Variable front yard setbacks would be permitted. Setbacks should be compatible with those on the abutting property.</p>	<p>Setbacks may vary, but should clearly define public streets and spaces.</p> <p>A setback of 12m on the west side of Yonge St. should be provided to protect the views of the church spires and provide for a promenade condition.</p>



The **Planning** Partnership 