



# LAWRENCE AVENUE EAST STUDY

PREPARED BY:

## FINAL REPORT

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City of Toronto  
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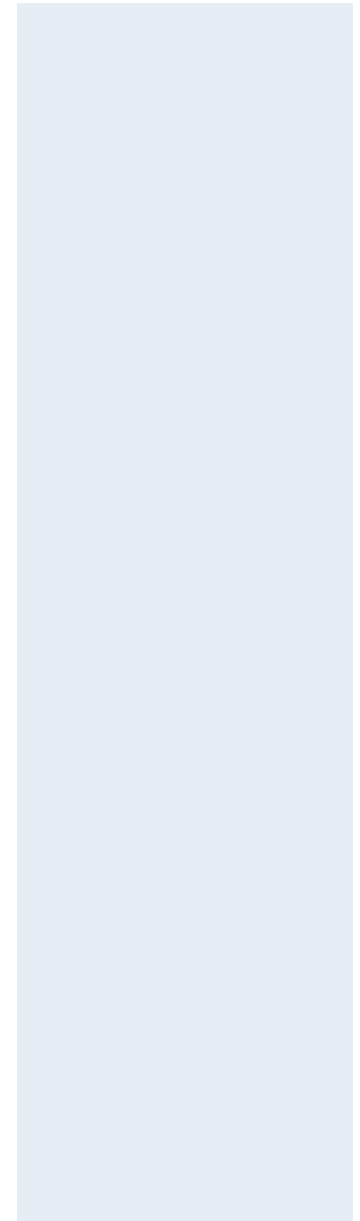
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lawrence Avenue East from Victoria Park Avenue to east of Birchmount Road has been identified as an Avenue in the City of Toronto Official Plan. The Plan describes Avenues as important corridors along major streets which offer opportunities for reinvestment for new housing and employment and an improved public realm. The Plan acknowledges that reurbanization will be an incremental process, and that a high quality, pedestrian-focused, transit-supportive public realm is an important aspect of creating successful Avenues.

The Study Area includes all the properties fronting onto Lawrence Avenue East between Victoria Park Avenue to east of Birchmount Road (see Figure A). This 2 kilometre stretch is comprised of mainly low rise and mid-rise residential buildings towards the western end, a commercial 'hub' in the central area, and the Wexford Employment District bordering the eastern edge of the study corridor. The established low density Wexford Heights neighbourhood surrounds the Study Area.

*"The Avenues will be transformed incrementally. They will change building-by-building over a number of years. The framework for new development on each Avenue will be established by a new zoning bylaw and design guidelines created in consultation with the local community."*

-- Toronto Official Plan

The purpose of the study is to determine:

- A policy framework and a set of recommended changes to the Zoning Bylaw for the area;
- A set of Urban Design Guidelines to address public realm improvements and guide development on privately owned lands;
- Criteria for introducing mixed-use mid-rise and tall buildings;
- Proposals for creating public open spaces and improving existing parks; and
- Recommendations for optimizing the use of the road allowance and enhancing transit, walking and cycling.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The urban environment in the area is characterized by low to mid-rise 1950's era apartment buildings in the western portion of the corridor, single-storey retail buildings in the central area, and low rise industrial and retail buildings to the east. The commercial area is diversified and largely distinguished by the multi-ethnic identity of many of the retailers.

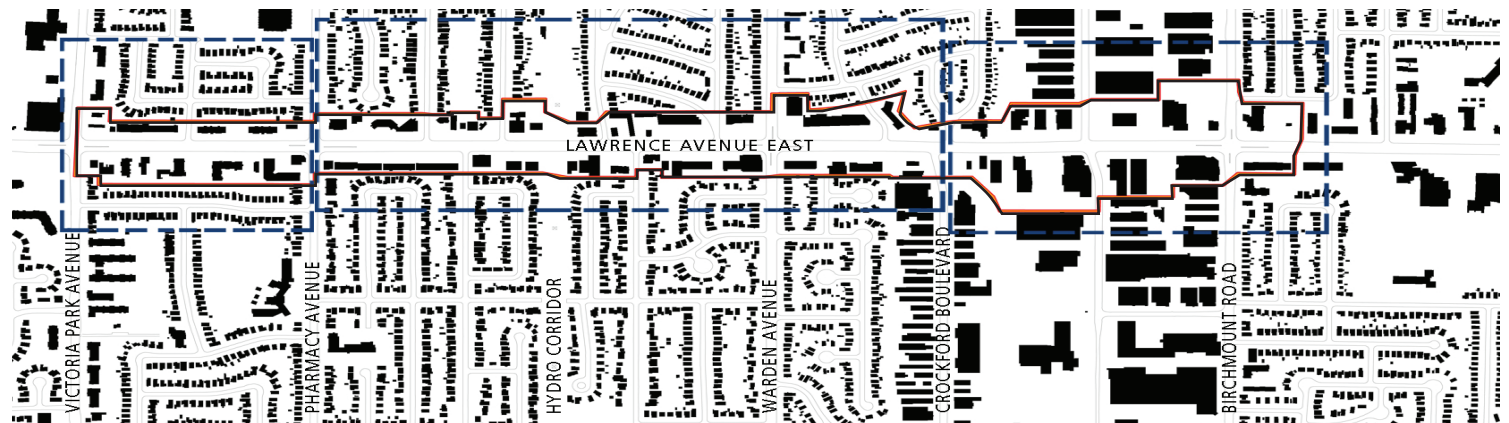


Figure A: Study Area

Lawrence Avenue East includes a wide expanse of pavement to accommodate seven lanes of traffic. Some stretches of the road, particularly along the 1 kilometre commercial/retail stretch between Pharmacy Avenue and Warden Avenue, are without signalized intersections. Public realm components include some dispersed street tree planting and limited street furniture. Numerous driveways interrupt the sidewalk and large areas are devoted to surface parking in front of buildings along the edge of the sidewalk, contributing to an auto-oriented character for the street.

The surrounding area is identified as parks deficient in the City's Official Plan. There are also some deficiencies in existing community services and facilities throughout the Study Area.

## STUDY PROCESS

The Lawrence Avenue East Study was based on an extensive consultation process with City staff and stakeholders, structured around a series of meetings and workshops.

A Local Advisory Committee (LAC) was formed to guide the study and assist with identifying issues and generating development options. The LAC consisted of City staff and neighbourhood stakeholders. A series of community meetings and workshops were also held in the area to discuss preferred solutions.

## ISSUES

The issues that emerged from the public consultation process established a framework for the formulation of a vision, study principles and recommendations. The issues are summarized as follows:

- The width of street, extensive surface parking areas, and empty spaces between buildings on either side of Lawrence Avenue East, result in an environment that is more car oriented than pedestrian friendly;
- Low intensity development is out of scale with the street-width;
- Buildings are generally unattractive;
- Boulevards lack amenities such as trees and street furniture and contribute to an inhospitable pedestrian environment;
- The area is deficient in parks and open spaces;
- A large number of driveways exit directly onto Lawrence Avenue East, causing breaks in the sidewalk and resulting in unsafe road conditions for vehicles exiting and entering onto Lawrence Avenue East;
- There are few opportunities for pedestrians to cross Lawrence Avenue East; and
- Many vehicles travel in excess of the posted speed limit causing safety concerns.

*The vision for Lawrence Avenue is to strengthen and improve its diverse multicultural retail, residential and mixed-use character by creating a more intimate street that enhances the pedestrian and cycling experience; adds greenery and street trees; increases the amount of urban open space and parks; and produces excellence in urban design.*

## STUDY VISION AND PRINCIPLES

### Vision

The values and priorities of the community are outlined in a summary vision for the study corridor that will serve as a guide to private sector redevelopment and provide a cohesive framework for coordinated public sector investment.

### Principles

The vision informs a set of planning principles that will guide recommended policy and zoning changes to assist City staff with evaluating development applications to ensure transformation of the corridor into a vibrant, mixed use, transit-oriented community that meets the needs of its population through appropriate intensification and provision of community services. The planning principles are comprised of the following:

- Improve pedestrian environment and cycling opportunities;
- Encourage attractive, well designed buildings;
- Promote active, street-related uses;
- Provide for mid-rise, street-related buildings at mid-block and higher buildings at key locations;
- Create a beautiful streetscape;
- Provide for a new open space and establish a green trail focus at the Hydro corridor;
- Improve connections between the residential neighbourhoods to the north and south of Lawrence Avenue; and
- Implement initiatives to achieve immediate improvements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Change along Lawrence Avenue East will not occur overnight but will evolve over an extended period of time. This incremental change will be structured to best capture the unique qualities of the community while addressing the corridor's weaknesses and overcoming its constraints.

The recommendations identified below respond to the issues identified by area stakeholders and City staff and consist of recommended official plan and zoning changes, supported by a set of urban design guidelines and transportation improvements.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The diverse residential and retail character of Lawrence Avenue East between Victoria Park Avenue and Birchmount Road can be strengthened and improved through the following:

1. New housing and employment uses will be encouraged in mixed-use developments that are contained within well-designed mid-rise or tall buildings at appropriate locations, provided among other planning matters the objectives pertaining to public realm improvements, outlined below, are met.

2. Improvements to the public and private realms shall be designed to create:
  - A high quality streetscape;
  - An enhanced environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
  - Additional greenery and street trees; and
  - More open spaces and parks.
3. New buildings shall generally be located in keeping with the Built Form policies of the Official Plan. In addition, all new developments shall be designed to:
  - Animate the pedestrian realm by locating active street-related retail uses at grade, where feasible;
  - Create a comfortable experience for pedestrians along Lawrence Avenue East and adjacent cross streets, through design features such as pedestrian scaled, street-related podium buildings that are, at a minimum, two storeys high with taller elements stepped back from the podium structures;
  - Respect privacy and overlook conditions for adjacent Neighbourhoods, by adhering to appropriate angular plane standards; and
  - Minimize wind impacts along the public realm on Lawrence Avenue East and adjacent open spaces and maximize opportunities for sunlight exposure on the public realm.
4. The tallest buildings shall be located adjacent to the Employment Areas, west of Birchmount Road;
5. Buildings located along Lawrence Avenue East between its intersections with Victoria Park, Pharmacy Avenue, Warden Avenue and Birchmount Road shall be scaled to reflect a mid-rise form of development,

generally consistent with a one-to-one relationship between building height and the width of the public right-of-way; and

6. Improvements to the public realm, including parks and open spaces, will be implemented through a combination of:
  - City capital funding;
  - Section 37 contributions from developments that result in increased heights and densities;
  - Cooperative initiatives amongst the City, local business association(s) and local residents; and
  - Improvements to the public realm adjacent to private development, including street tree planting and opportunities to provide publicly accessible private open spaces secured through Site Plan Agreements.

#### ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Zoning Bylaw be amended for properties in the Study Area fronting on Lawrence Avenue East between Victoria Park Avenue and to the east of Birchmount Road to incorporate the following (see Figure 5.1 Angular Plane on page 49)

1. A list of permitted uses that include: a wide range of residential, retail, commercial, institutional and community service uses, with the exception of detached houses, semi-detached houses, and "auto related uses";
2. Maximum permitted building heights and densities in accordance with Figure 5.6 Proposed Building Heights and Densities on page 54, with tall buildings above a height of 27 metres, where appropriate as per the Tall Building Guidelines not exceeding a floor plate of 800 square metres;