

## **Mimico-By-The-Lake Implementation Action Memo**

**September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The *Mimico 20/20: Revitalization Action Plan* project was launched by the City of Toronto in December, 2008. The project was led by Urban Strategies Inc. and supported by ERA Architects, IBI Group and Focus Consulting. The primary goal of the *Mimico 20/20: Revitalization Action Plan* was to advance the established Mimico Vision (2007) and the seven supporting Community Priorities through the creation of a flexible long-term development framework for this waterfront community. This study will result in a long term revitalization plan for Mimico-By-The-Lake that builds on the area's strengths and creates new opportunities for positive change along the Lake Shore Boulevard corridor.

The core study area is located between Louisa Street and Miles Road stretching from the water's edge to just north of Lake Shore Boulevard. The wider context area considered extends west from from Mimico Creek to Royal York Road and north from the water's edge to the rail corridor.

### **2.0 Mimico 20/20 Revitalization Charette**

An essential component of the vision process was the Mimico 20/20 Revitalization Charette, undertaken in April, 2009. The Charette was a major four-day community event, offering almost 20 separate educational sessions on various city-building themes. The format of the event was diverse and included round table discussions, workshops, invited guest speakers, on-going scale modeling and hands-on design sessions. Sessions were open to the public, and attracted over 200 participants, including residents, community groups, politicians, City staff, agencies, land owners and businesses.

During the Charrette, participants identified targeted strategies to direct future change across Mimico-By-The-Lake and created a large scale model that explored potential future development opportunities. The scale model was a physical interpretation of the community's vision and acted as the conceptual framework plan for future redevelopment and revitalization opportunities within the study area. A supporting report was prepared, *Mimico 20/20: Revitalization Action Plan Proceedings Report*. The report traced the evolution of the Mimico visioning process, presented the development framework and articulated a series of supporting revitalization initiatives to be implemented across the study area. The report concluded with a series of implementation recommendations.

### **3. A Conceptual Development Framework for Mimico-By-The-Lake**

The vision for Mimico-By-The-Lake assumes incremental evolution over a long period, not wholesale change. Instead, future change needs to be contained and directed towards those locations best positioned to bring forward wider revitalization priorities and enhance the quality of the neighbourhood.

The development framework recognizes that the most successful places are those that are able to adapt and change over the years as market conditions and user requirements alter. Currently Mimico-By-The-Lake is highly constrained due to limited availability of infrastructure across the study area, complex land

ownership, parcel size and configuration. To begin to address these challenges, the development framework proposed seven key moves that will create the physical conditions necessary to attract future investment:

1. Creating a more focused Village Heart to concentrate the core of Mimico-By-The-Lake between Allen Avenue and Albert Avenue. This also involves an expansion of the Village Heart towards the water along existing and new north-south streets;
2. Expanding the street network south of Lake Shore Boulevard to provide greater access to the water, break up large parcels into more marketable/developable pieces, and create new addresses for future development;
3. Introducing new east-west pedestrian and vehicular connections south of Lake Shore Boulevard, north of the water's edge;
4. Expanding the waterfront park area to both the east and the west of Amos Waites Park;
5. Upgrading the quality and character of Lake Shore Boulevard so it functions more as a 'main street', balanced with its role as a through travel route;
6. Accommodating a greater diversity of housing types by developing new residential and mixed use buildings along and south of Lake Shore Boulevard, while retaining existing rental provision; and
7. Intensifying the north side of Lake Shore with new mixed use, residential and commercial developments in a manner that is sensitive to the adjacent neighbourhood.

### 3.1 *Urban Structure*

To begin to address some of the area's physical challenges, and allow for the evolution and revitalization of the neighbourhood, the Plan proposes an augmented urban structure that expands the area's road and path network, creates additional parks and open spaces and allows for significant new in-fill opportunities.

The proposed new urban structure creates a fully connected park, path and roadway system and includes the completion of the waterfront trail, new east west and north south connections (focused south of Lake Shore Boulevard) as well as mid-block pedestrian linkages to the water and across the district.

Bringing forward the community's first priority around creating better access to the water, the Plan identifies an opportunity for nine new connections from Lake Shore Boulevard south to Lake Ontario. The expanded road network, includes an extension of Albert Avenue, Superior Avenue, Alexander Street and Norris Crescent. This road and pedestrian network provides new addresses for development and greater visual and physical connections to the Lake.

The Plan identifies two opportunities for an expansion of the existing park and open space system: Amos Waites Park is to be extended to the north and west towards Lakeshore Boulevard; and, the public waterfront trail and park area is to be continued as far as the western boundary of 2521-2543 Lake Shore Boulevard West (Longo's site) at Miles Road. This provision is in addition to the proposed Phase II expansion of Lake Shore Park, running along the water's edge eastwards from Superior Avenue and

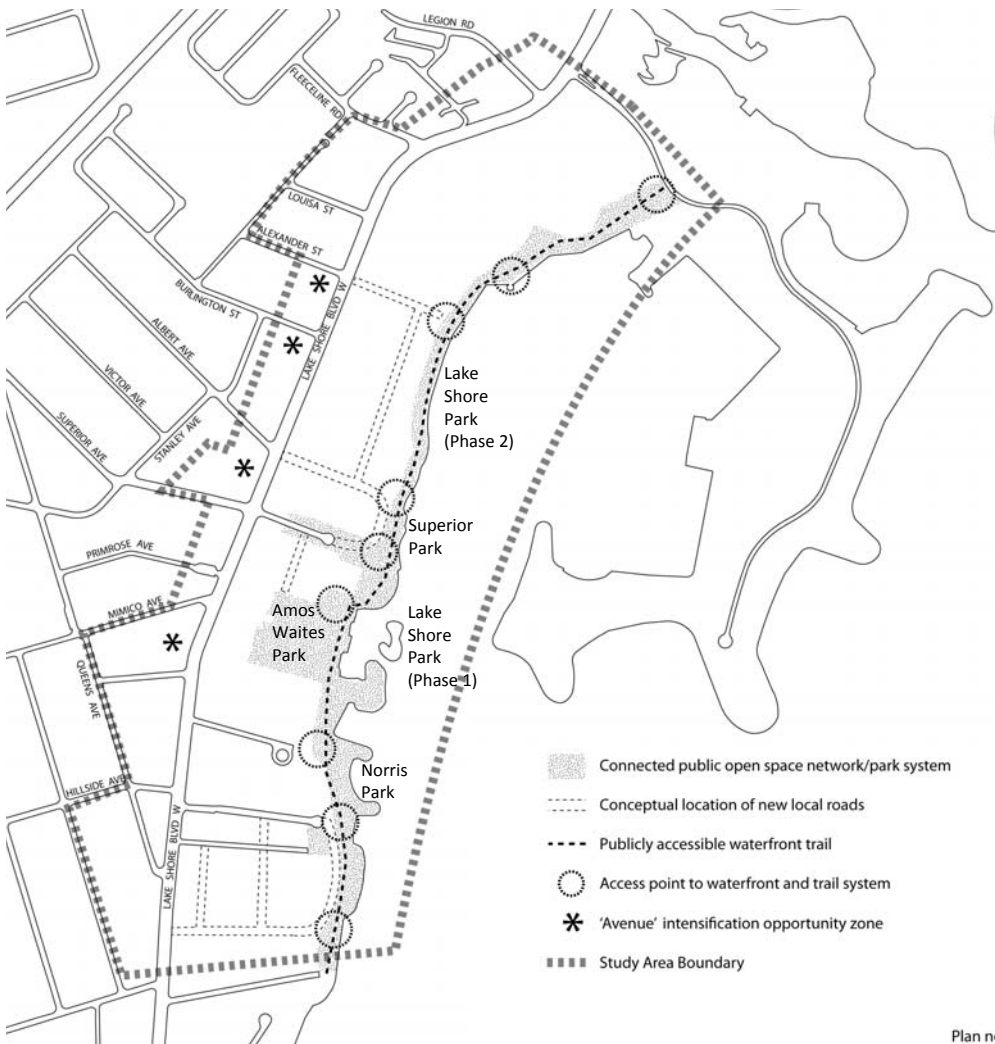
connecting into the existing boardwalk and park system at Grand Harbour. This project is being undertaken by TRCA and Waterfront Toronto and is expected to move forward shortly.

South of Lake Shore Boulevard future development will require a new public network of streets to divide the land into a more urban pattern of streets and blocks, provide a framework for intensification of existing uses and accommodate new uses and forms of development. It is anticipated that the City of Toronto, together with the development community and other partners, such as Waterfront Toronto and the TRCA, will be responsible for bringing forward the identified missing infrastructure pieces.

To ensure that the character of Lake Shore Boulevard is preserved and that the street can operate effectively as a 'main street' for the Mimico-By-The-Lake community, it is envisioned that the proposed Waterfront West LRT route be accommodated within the street's existing right-of-way, preserving and, wherever possible, enhancing existing sidewalk dimensions.

The illustrative plan below identifies the required urban structure necessary to support the Vision.

Figure 1: Proposed Urban Structure



Plan not to scale

### 3.2 *Land Uses*

The proposed new urban structure creates the opportunity for new open spaces and development that can be introduced incrementally over time. This will result in a modification of existing land uses in selected locations.

The extension of Superior Avenue allows for an expanded 'Village Heart' to stretch from Lake Shore Boulevard to the water's edge. The new road network creates a more logical parcel configuration in the heart of Mimico-By-The-Lake, and over the fullness of time, allows significant new development to be introduced in formerly underutilized locations. To allow for future growth and diversification of uses, this mixed use Village Heart needs to be redesignated to mixed use from its current designation as an Apartment Neighbourhood (refer to Section 4.0 for further details)

With an expanded Amos Waites Park at its core, this seven block Village Heart will become the community and commercial hub for Mimico-By-The-Lake. It is anticipated that this area will support the greatest level of change and is able to accommodate significant new development. A broad mix of uses, including retail, office, residential, commercial, open space, recreational and community uses should be present in the Village Heart.

Flanking the Village Heart are two existing apartment neighbourhoods. These areas are located to the west between Miles Road and Amos Waites Park and to the east between the extended Albert and Alexander streets. Although it is expected that these areas will continue to function as primarily residential destinations with minimal commercial uses permitted, both of these apartment neighbourhoods are in need of significant revitalization. To achieve the goal of revitalization, intensification will be required (refer to Section 3.3 below). It should be noted that other than the site at 2521-2543 Lake Shore Boulevard West (Longo's) and one cluster of buildings near the eastern edge of the study area, the removal of existing apartment buildings is not contemplated. Any redevelopment will require a one-for-one replacement of rental housing units, consistent with the City of Toronto Official Plan policies.

In both of these identified apartment neighborhoods, as the area evolves, intensification can be accommodated in locations currently occupied by waterfront surface parking lots. To unlock these underutilized parcels, a new east-west road will need to be provided. It is expected that this will be accomplished through the development of each parcel between Superior Avenue and Alexander Street. To ensure that this evolving apartment neighbourhood is fully connected into the surrounding context and to maximize opportunities for revitalization, the plan also proposes the extension of Norris Crescent, Albert Avenue and Alexander Street.

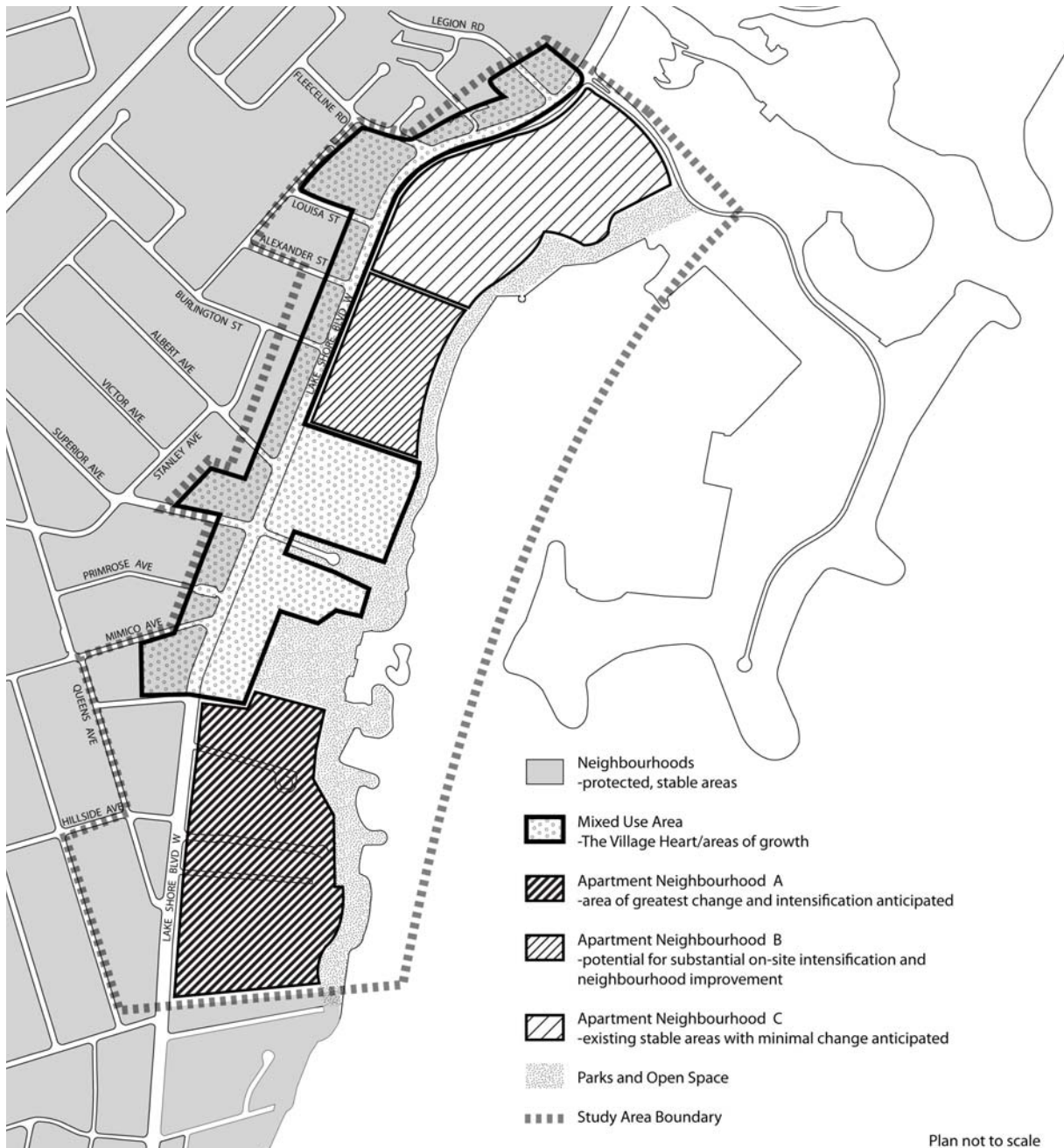
At the eastern edge of Mimico-By-The-Lake, south of Lake Shore Boulevard and east of Alexander Street, is another contemporary high-density apartment neighbourhood. Dominated by two large developments, Marina Del Ray and Grand Harbour, this area will remain as a residential neighbourhood with limited opportunities for intensification or diversification of uses.

Lake Shore Boulevard is to be retained as an important 'main street' connecting directly into the new Village Heart. Lake Shore will continue to operate as a mixed use avenue for Mimico-By-The-Lake. In

keeping with re-urbanization objectives, the Plan recommends that existing underutilized sites, particularly on the northern side of the street, be targeted for intensification.

The illustrative plan below identifies the recommended land uses in support of the vision.

Figure 2: Proposed Land Use Plan



### 3.3 Density

As part of the study, an economic assessment was undertaken to determine the necessary density and quality of development to generate the revenues required to make redevelopment financially feasible, while ensuring that the plan includes retention/replacement/rehabilitation of all existing rental units on a one-for-one basis, consistent with the City of Toronto Official Plan policies.

To move the vision forward and protect the existing quantum of rental units, significant new density is required. To create the values needed, the economic assessment concluded that total density (including replacing existing gross floor area) in the range of 3.5 to 6.0 times lot coverage may be sufficient to permit or provide incentive for property owners and developers to undertake redevelopment of these properties.

The development framework directs density to targeted locations, primarily around the mixed use Village Heart and within 2521-2543 Lake Shore Boulevard West (a large site under single ownership where the desire for significant change has already been expressed).

## 4.0 Policy Fit

The City of Toronto's Official Plan provides a blueprint for directing growth across the city over the next 30 years. As a regulatory document, all future development in Toronto will be evaluated against the policies of the Official Plan. Section 3 of the Official Plan details how new development should be located and organized in order to build a successful city. Any new developments in Mimico-By-The-Lake will need to respond to those requirements. Presented below are the main land use policies against which the Mimico-By-The-Lake plan will be assessed against.

### 4.1 Current Policy

As presented in Figure 3, the Mimico-By-The-Lake is currently subject to the following land use designations, described below.

#### *Mixed Use Areas*

- These areas are expected to absorb the majority of employment and residential growth within the city.
- Growth is to occur through on-site intensification and the development of underutilized lands.
- This designation permits the broadest range of uses, including residential, offices, retail, institutional, entertainment, recreational, cultural activities, utilities, parks and open spaces.
- A mix of uses can be contained across a site as well as within individual buildings.

#### *Neighbourhoods*

- These areas are considered to be physically stable with minimal changes desired.
- Are to be dominated by residential uses contained within lower scale buildings (4 storeys or less).
- Intensification within established neighbourhoods is generally not encouraged.
- No new higher-scale apartment buildings are permitted.
- Any new infill development must respect existing built form in terms of height, massing and scale.

### Apartment Neighbourhoods

- Built up *Apartment Neighbourhoods* are identified as stable areas of the city where significant growth is generally not anticipated.
- Significant growth is generally not intended within *Apartment Neighbourhoods*.
- Infill in the form of additional townhouses or apartments is permitted on underutilized land if it improves the quality of life for the local community.
- Any new infill development must contribute to the City's priorities of providing a good quality of life for both new and existing residents as well as creating a more environmentally sustainable city.

### Parks & Open Space Areas:

- The role of parks and open spaces is to provide passive and active recreational opportunities for city residents.
- Development is generally prohibited within *Parks & Open Space Areas*.

### Avenue

Importantly, the area also contains an 'Avenue' classification for Lake Shore Boulevard. Avenues are identified by the City as 'Reurbanization' corridors and permit the broadest range of uses. Like *Mixed Use* areas, Avenues are expected to absorb the majority of residential and employment growth. However, it is noted that not all lands along Avenues are identified for growth and neighbourhood protection policies prevail. For areas identified as an Avenue, an 'Avenues Study' or 'Avenue Segment Review' are to be undertaken to direct future change.

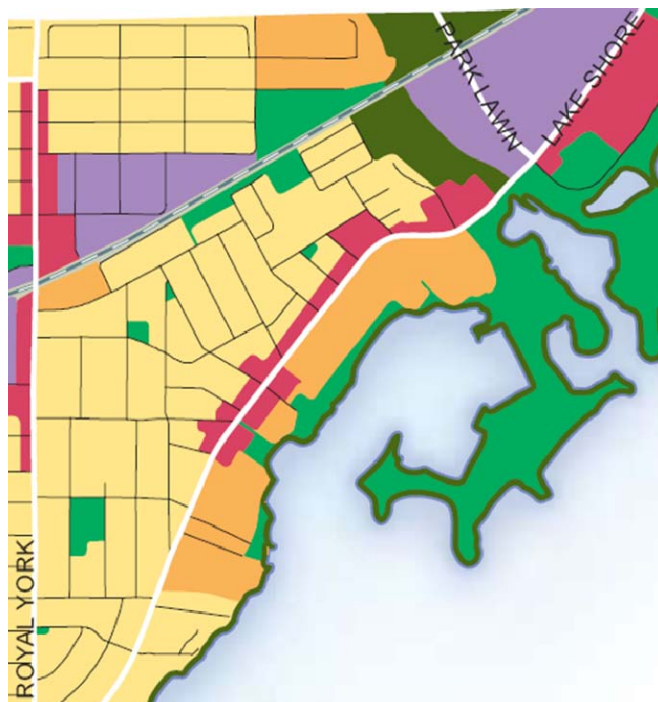


Figure 3:  
 Land Use Plan, City of Toronto Official Plan



## 4.2 Policy Implications

If the Mimico 20/20 Vision is to be implemented, Mimico-By-The-Lake must be understood as a special location with particular circumstances that have resulted in under realized potential and unique modern-day conditions.

Within the current policy framework, the designated land uses do not recognize the opportunities of Mimico-By-The-Lake and restrict opportunities for the City to implement the agreed vision. To deliver wider community benefit to Mimico-By-The-Lake, protect and improve existing rental housing and bring forward the Mimico 20/20 Vision, the City's policies for this location need to be modified to allow more significant change to occur.

The Mimico 20/20 Vision anticipates incremental, long term change and significant but focused intensification across portions of the study area. Although many areas will remain unchanged - such as lands within the existing Neighbourhood designation, the Mixed Use designation along Lake Shore Boulevard and portions of the Apartment Neighbourhood designation – some selected locations require more significant revitalization if the vision is to be realized.

As presented in Section 3.3, new density is required to achieve a new sense of place and create the fiscal values needed to bring positive change to Mimico and deliver the Vision. Portions of this required density will need to be achieved within existing *Apartment Neighbourhood* designated areas. The challenge is therefore to allow greater change in portions of the *Apartment Neighbourhood* designated areas than is currently permitted through the policy framework.

## 5.0 Recommendations

Urban evolution and improvement has eluded the waterside area of this community due in part by challenging parcel configurations, a lack of much needed infrastructure, limited market interest and land use policies that have not invited change or new investment across much of the study area. Consequently, Mimico-By-The-Lake (south of Lake Shore Boulevard) has remained stagnant, with little investment or revitalization. Today, however, this waterside community is a highly suitable candidate for sensitive growth and change. Attracting new investment to this area will help to:

- protect existing rental housing, while creating more balanced housing choices
- continue efforts to open up the waterfront to the community
- make more efficient use of land along an important city Avenue
- reconfigured land parcels to allow for a more connected and complete street and block pattern
- create opportunities for new parks, open spaces and expanded community amenities
- bring much needed new physical and social infrastructure into the neighbourhood
- unlock a significant land asset

In order to implement the Vision for Mimico-By-The-Lake, it is recommended that an amendment be made to the City of Toronto Official Plan through the creation of Site and Area Specific Policies for Mimico-By-The-Lake. Site specific policies should be implemented by schedules generally in accordance with those presented in Section 3.1 and Section 3.2 and should include the provisions identified below.



## 5.1 Land Use

The *Apartment Neighbourhood* designation for Mimico-By-The-Lake needs to be more embracing of wider change than current policies permit, specifically:

### *The Village Heart:*

It is intended that this area will function as the community and commercial centre for Mimico-By-The-Lake. This area will support a broad mix of uses, including retail, office, residential, commercial, open space, recreational and community uses.

This area will support the greatest level of change and can accommodate significant new development in a mix of high, mid and low rise structures. To protect the character of Lake Shore Boulevard and limit impact on the neighbourhood area to the north, lower rise buildings should be positioned towards Lake Shore Boulevard. Mid rise structures can be used to define the street wall of the new blocks south of Lake Shore Boulevard. Taller elements should be used to create visual interest and punctuate the block pattern at key locations. Height should be directed away from the established low rise neighbourhoods. To allow for privacy and to mitigate environmental conditions, taller buildings should be well spaced (in line with the City of Toronto's Tall Building guidelines).

To bring further activity and diversity to the centre of Mimico-By-The-Lake, buildings in this location should accommodate a mix of uses, with retail and community uses at grade (in selected locations) and a mix of office and residential provided above grade. Where significant residential uses are proposed, parking should be underground.

Lake Shore Boulevard will be retained as the area's 'Main Street' and continue to function as an Avenue. The mixed use designation should be retained and extended to the west as far as Allen Avenue. The quality and character of Lake Shore Boulevard should be upgraded so it functions more as a neighbourhood main street and less as a through travel route.

Along Lake Shore Boulevard, four sites on the northern side of the street have been identified as suitable for intensification. In these locations, commercial uses should be promoted at grade with residential and/or commercial above grade.

### *Apartment Neighbourhood A (West):*

The eastern portion of this area will remain stable. The western portion of this area at 2521-2543 Lake Shore Boulevard West has been identified as a location suitable for significant change and intensification (the Longo's site), pending the provision of the required infrastructure. Intensification of this large, deep site will require the introduction of a more urban street grid across the site to break up the parcel and fully connect it into the existing street and path system. This will help ensure that the site operates as an integrated component of the wider area and fosters a feeling of public accessibility. To help achieve this, the Plan identifies two new east-west streets south of Lake Shore Boulevard that will create a normalized street grid and sub-divide the deep parcel into marketable blocks. Where viable, connections through to Norris Crescent should be pursued.

This area should remain predominantly residential with limited commercial permission. To animate important public areas, commercial permissions could be considered along Lake Shore Boulevard and/or in selected locations fronting the water. Also fronting the water is the expanded trail system and the provision of a new waterfront park. This is an important initiative for ensuring that the waterfront remains publicly accessible.

New buildings and/or additions to existing buildings must be complementary to existing buildings. Taller buildings should transition to lower buildings and established neighbourhood areas. All new development must front onto public streets, providing a clear address and access to new buildings.

*Apartment Neighbourhood B (Central):*

Change will be slow and incremental. Although much of this area will remain stable, sensitive infill will be encouraged in selected locations.

This area should remain predominantly residential with limited commercial permission. To animate Mimico's most public areas, commercial permissions could be considered along Lake Shore Boulevard. Any additions to existing buildings or new buildings introduced over time must be complementary to existing buildings. Taller buildings should transition to lower buildings and established neighbourhood areas. All new development must front the street, providing for a clear address and access. Where viable, existing buildings should be retained.

*Apartment Neighbourhood C (East):*

This area should remain as a high density apartment neighbourhood. There are limited opportunities for intensification or diversification of uses in this area due to existing build out and on site structural constraints (underground parking structures).

## 5.2 Rental Replacement

In order to maintain a diversity of housing types and provide accommodation for a range of households, the Official Plan establishes clear policies targeted at preserving the city's existing rental and affordable housing stock. Working within the existing policy context, opportunities for off-site replacement are highly constrained. Consequently, for the purpose of this study, the priority responses to rental rehabilitation or replacement are as follows:

1. On site rehabilitation of existing housing stock.
2. Infill around existing housing stock (on site intensification).
3. Replacement of existing rental stock on same site, or consolidation of sites.
4. Creation of new rental stock off -site, in close proximity within the community.

Full consideration needs to be given to each priority before moving to the next priority. Only in the most unique or unusual circumstances will off-site relocation or replacement be considered by the City.

### 5.3 Density

Specific density allowances will need to be identified on a proposal by proposal basis. It is anticipated that the range of density allowances will be between 3.5 and 6.0 times lot coverage. The highest density, most urban form areas will occur within the Village Heart and 2521-2543 Lake Shore Boulevard West.

Any new development should have regard for the existing residential neighbourhood and provide transition between higher buildings and lower established areas. A series of detailed built form guidelines should be developed to ensure that any new developments on site are compatible with existing development and bring forward the intentions of the community's Vision.

### 5.4 Infrastructure

A new public network of streets and paths will be required south of Lake Shore Boulevard to divide the land into a more urban pattern of streets and blocks, provide a framework for intensification of existing uses and accommodate new uses and forms of development. The major infrastructure changes proposed in the area to accommodate revitalization objectives are shown conceptually on Figure 1.

### 5.5 Open Space

Universal accessibility to and along the waterfront is critical for the successful revitalization of the area. To achieve this, a system of linked open spaces will be provided through the area, as shown conceptually on Figure 2. Included on the proposed provision is the extension of the waterfront trail, the expansion of Amos Waites Park and a new linear park along Superior Avenue, south of Lake Shore Boulevard.

Nine access routes between Lake Shore Boulevard and the waterfront have been identified and are presented conceptually on Figure 1.

### 5.6 Other

Other studies, actions and potential projects to be considered include the following:

- Identifying opportunities to promote the preservation and renewal of existing rental housing, including:
  - application of the City's Tower Renewal program;
  - tax relief for rental housing as per the provisions of the Municipal Act Capital Facilities By-law, and equalization of rental housing tax rates with condominium rates; and,
  - participation in CMHC's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program which provides funding to undertake housing repair to ensure that it meets the minimum federal health and safety standards.
- Prepare a Public Realm Plan that links streets, paths, parks and the waterfront as a unified high quality, well-designed public realm. A Parks Plan or Community Master Plan for the spit and shoreline area should be included as part of this plan.

- Undertake a Design Guideline Study to set design parameters for potential new developments and ensure compatibility with the Mimico 20/20 Vision.
- Undertake additional studies required to fully understand community needs, including a Community Profile, Community Facilities Assessment and Community Census/Community Needs Audit.
- Work with the Councillor's Office to identify a community-led mix of programming opportunities for Amos Waites Park and Festival Plaza (festivals, art shows, film & music events, markets, heritage celebrations, themed events, carnivals, etcetera).
- Work with the TTC to define an appropriate and 'custom fit' solution for transit through the Mimico-By-The-Lake community.

A full list of additional recommended regulatory changes, projects and supporting actions required to deliver the agreed Vision for Mimico-By-The-Lake is included as part of *The Mimico 20/20: Revitalization Action Plan Report*. *The Mimico 20/20: Revitalization Action Plan Report* should be read in conjunction with this technical Implementation Action Memo.