

Chapter 3

from Vision *to* Plan

The Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan provides a comprehensive planning framework that will guide the transformation of the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood. The Revitalization Plan expresses a vision for Lawrence-Allen, articulating a physical plan for the Focus Area. (Figures 9, 10, and 11) A beautiful, clear and connected public realm will support a diversity of people, activities and private development, in a mixed community that will grow over the next 20 years. New development blocks will support a mix of appropriately located and scaled building types.

I. A BEAUTIFUL, SAFE, AND FUNCTIONAL PUBLIC REALM

Beautiful, comfortable, safe and accessible public spaces – streets, parks, open spaces, and public buildings – are the setting for civic life. The Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan integrates these elements into a cohesive public realm, creating structure and opportunity for new development and investment. The careful arrangement of public parks, streets, open spaces and community buildings speak to the importance of the public realm in community livability, social cohesiveness, environmental sustainability, and place-making.

The Revitalization Plan provides a new network of parks that establish a hierarchy of focal points and public spaces for community life.

- Four new Neighbourhood Parks create community focal points and provide amenity for residents who live near them.
- A large new Community Park transforms the existing central park and anchors, the proposed Commons area at the centre of Lawrence Heights. A new pedestrian bridge links the two sides of the community park across Allen Road.
- Baycrest Park remains as a District Park and is enhanced to serve both local residents and park-users from other parts of the City.
- A Greenway along Allen Road will provide a landscaped multi-use trail for pedestrians and cyclists moving through the community and linking the park system into the City's larger network of trails.
- Parks in the plan are often located adjacent to school yards in order to maximize possibilities for open spaces.

Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan
REVITALIZATION PLAN - FOCUS AREA



Figure 9: Bird's eye view of Revitalization Plan in the Focus Area - 3D model produced by planningAlliance



Illustration looking west to the northeast Neighbourhood Park - Rendering produced by Sweeny Sterling Finlayson & Co Architects

The new streets included in the Revitalization Plan are to provide enjoyable and comfortable spaces for pedestrians and public activity, as well as transit and vehicular use. A network of public streets establishes a hierarchy of different street types and address for new buildings. The Plan replaces the existing ring road in Lawrence Heights with a new north-south and a new east-west Primary Street. Streets are designed to support a well-balanced transportation system and to connect Lawrence Heights to surrounding neighbourhoods and to the larger city, counteracting the historical isolation of the neighbourhood. The streets provide clear and direct travel routes between important destinations in the area and provide connectivity with the surrounding community and the broader city street network.

The public realm in the Revitalization Plan provides infrastructure to improve the range of transportation options available in Lawrence Heights and the surrounding area. The design of streets creates safe and comfortable conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, to better support these transportation choices and to provide desirable public spaces. The plan also provides for pedestrian and cycling connections between the local streets of Lawrence Heights and those of the surrounding community, and across Allen Road. The Lawrence West and Yorkdale subway stations will be the backbone of a rebalanced transportation system in the area. Safe access to the stations will be improved for all users, so that they can become better integrated with the surrounding communities.

The Allen Road has divided the neighbourhood and challenged the public realm of Lawrence Heights since its construction. The Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan examines Allen Road as an opportunity for improvement. An Individual Environmental Assessment is required to fully determine the future of Allen Road and possibilities for pedestrian improvements, new east-west links and improvements at the subway stations. In the meantime, a Greenway will begin the transformation of Allen Road into public space. This pedestrian and cycling trail along the east side of Allen Road is both a functional and attractive element of the public realm.

Public buildings in the Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan – community facilities and schools – have a number of potential locations, selected to be prominent, visible, and accessible. Potential sites are located near parks and public spaces to take advantage of opportunities to design the interior and exterior as an integrated whole.

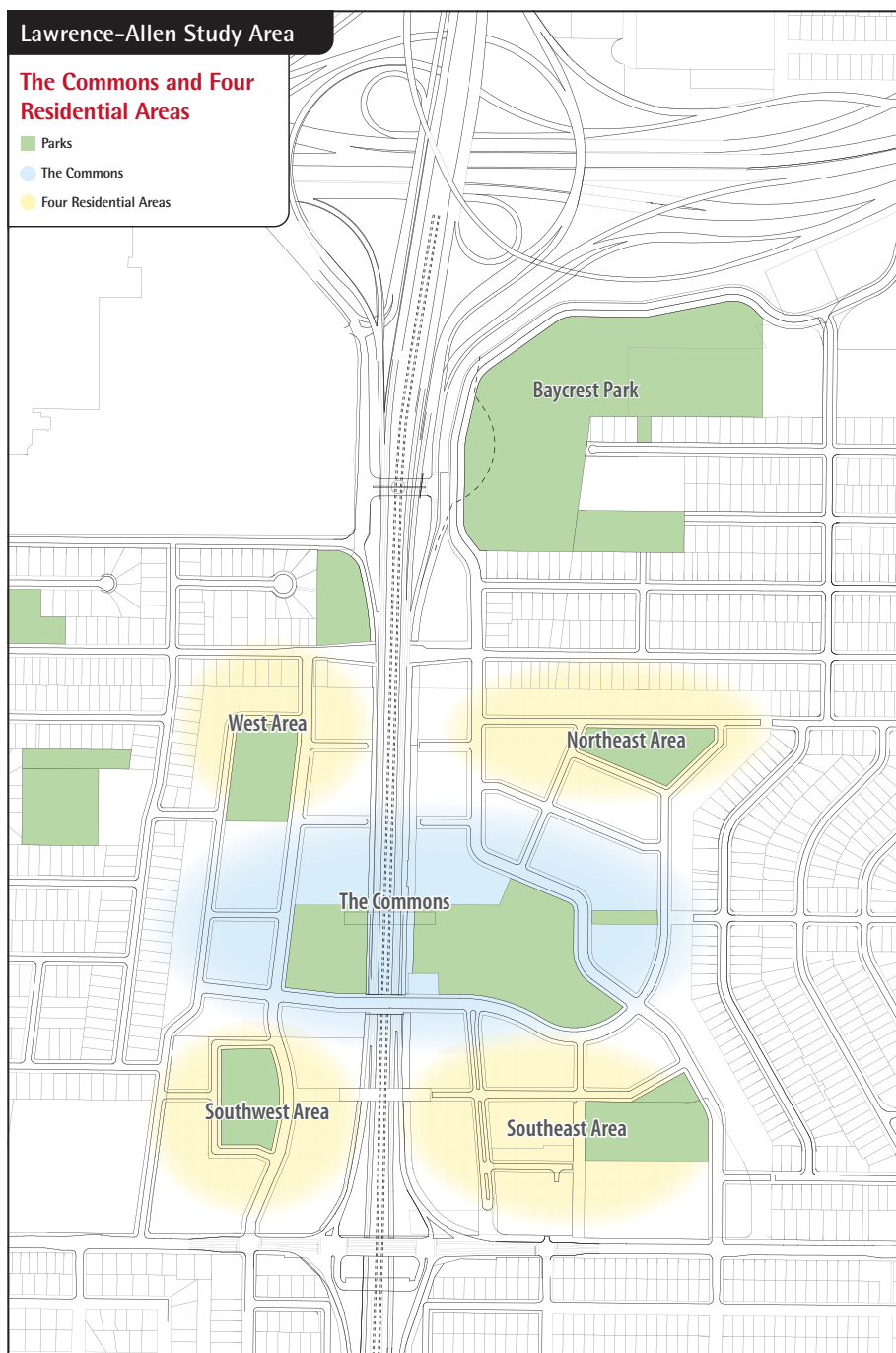


Illustration looking north on Replin Road - Rendering produced by Sweeny Sterling Finlayson & Co Architects Inc.

II. ONE COMMUNITY WITH FOUR RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan establishes a physical structure to support a new Lawrence Heights neighbourhood comprising five geographic areas. (Figure 10)

At the centre of Lawrence Heights is the “Commons”. The Commons will feature a large new Community Park, a new community centre, the New Heights Community Health Centre, schools, and retail. A new pedestrian connection will complement the existing Flemington Road bridge to provide two Allen Road crossings. Retail opportunities along the portion of Flemington Road facing the park will create a “main street” atmosphere. The synergy of community amenities in the Commons will make the area a hub of



community activity, which may attract both local residents and residents from other neighbourhoods in the Lawrence-Allen area.

The other four geographic areas border on the Commons and each has its own community focal point.

- *The Northeast Area* enjoys a local Neighbourhood Park as a focal point, with many of the area's homes ringing the park. A large part of the area is kept at the existing low-rise character of Lawrence Heights, with townhouses and parkland. Mid-rise apartment buildings are located to frame the edges of the primary street that passes through the area to connect with Ranee Avenue.
- *The West Area* is similar to the Northeast, in that its focal point is a Neighbourhood Park, which is ringed by many of the area's homes – both townhouses and apartment buildings. Townhouses are located on the edges of the area, with mid-rise apartment buildings lining the new primary street that crosses the area to connect with Ranee Avenue.
- *The Southwest Area* comprises lands owned primarily by RioCan. Its focal point is a Neighbourhood Park, which will likely be surrounded by active retail uses that replace the existing retail in the Lawrence Square Shopping Centre. Taller buildings are located on top of retail space near the Lawrence West Subway Station, close to Lawrence Avenue West and Allen Road.
- *The Southeast Area* is focused on a new secondary school on TDSB's Bathurst Heights property. The parkettes and schoolyard will provide green space and amenity for residents. Taller buildings are located near the Lawrence West Subway Station, close to Lawrence Avenue and Allen Road. Mid-rise base buildings and townhouses mediate the influence of taller buildings on the public realm and on existing homes.

The Focus Area also includes a sixth area, comprising publicly owned parkland and schools, north of Ranee Avenue. The plan provides for a number of potential changes and investments in this part of the Focus Area:

- Investment in Baycrest Park to improve the physical and visual accessibility and usefulness of the parkland.
- The potential to develop the southernmost portion of Baycrest Park, with residential units, a community facility, and/or local convenience retail, subject to a number of criteria and conditions.
- A new Primary Street on the west and north side of Baycrest Park, creating a public edge to the park, enhancing safety and access, and establishing a new route from Lawrence Heights to Neptune Drive and Bathurst Street.
- Sites for an elementary school and a secondary school.

Figure 10: The Commons and Four Residential Areas



Illustration looking north on the Greenway next to Allen Road - Rendering produced by planningAlliance

III. A MIXED COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT DIVERSITY

The Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan is a plan for a mixed community. While the Lawrence-Allen area overall currently has a mix of uses and housing, the Lawrence Heights neighbourhood does not. Lawrence Heights provides only rent-geared-to-income social housing.

In the Revitalization Plan, all of the existing social housing will be replaced over time with new social housing. In addition, the Plan provides for new residential development of market housing, including private townhouses and condominium apartment buildings. Intensification of the area will lead to a mix of housing to serve a diverse mix of incomes, ages, populations, and household sizes.

The Revitalization Plan proposes a mix of uses, with retail, employment, community services, and schools located along-side new housing. It also provides for a mix of building types and scales, with townhouses, mid-rise buildings and tall buildings located in the new neighbourhood.

REVITALIZATION PLAN - PLAN VIEW

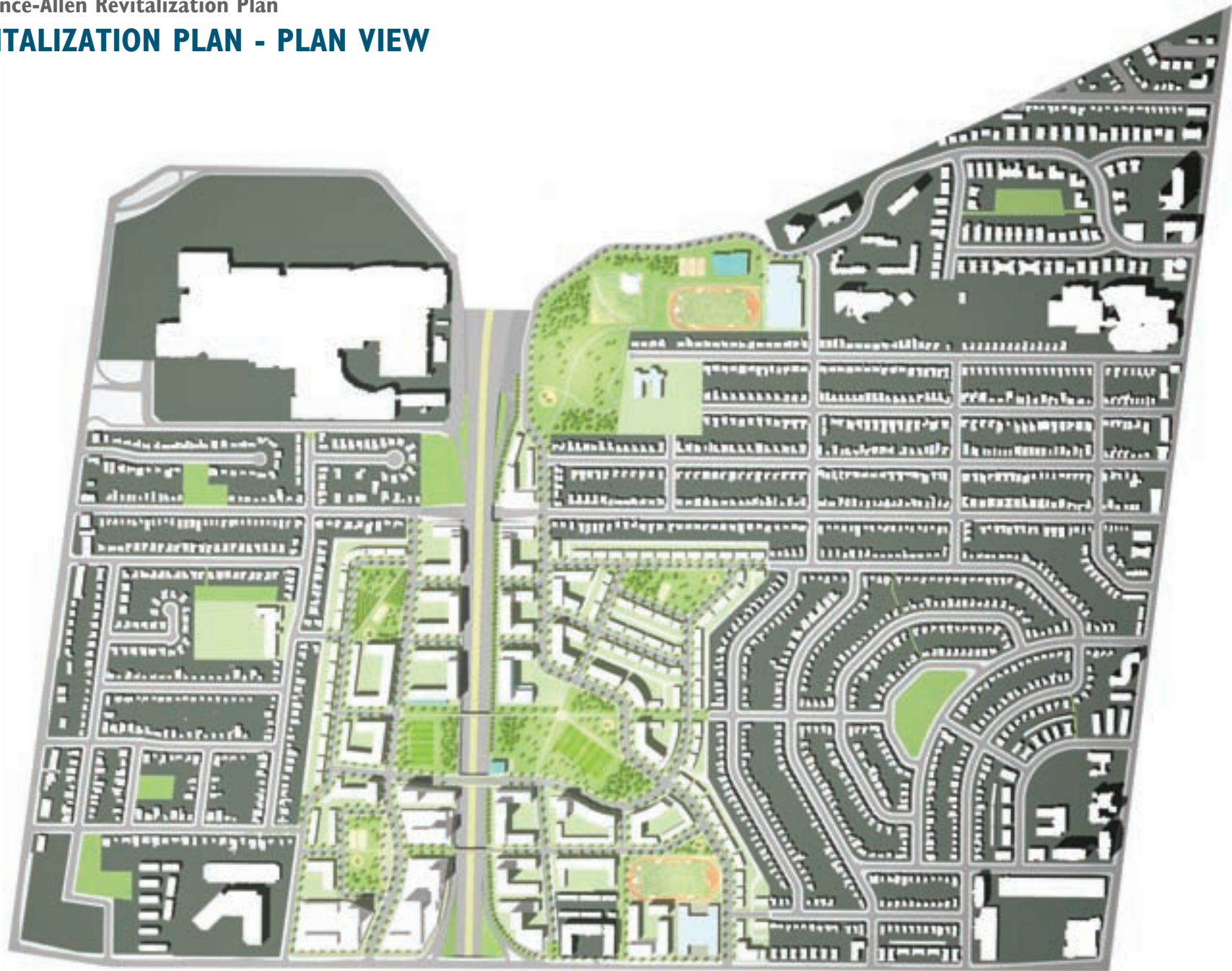


Figure 11: Plan view of Revitalization Plan - produced by planningAlliance



Illustration looking east on Stockton Road - Rendering produced by planningAlliance



Bird's eye view - Northeast Area - 3D model produced by planningAlliance



Bird's eye view - West Area - 3D model produced by planningAlliance

IV. PROPER LOCATION AND SCALE OF BUILDINGS

Development blocks in the Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan provide locations for new buildings and represent both investment opportunities and appropriately located and scaled buildings to frame and support the public realm.

The Plan creates development blocks to accommodate different building types, including townhouses, mid-rise building, and taller buildings. These buildings can in turn accommodate both a mix of uses – with residential, retail, employment, community services, and schools – and a mix of market housing and social housing, to serve a diverse mix of incomes, ages, and populations.

The Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan maintains the low scale of the existing neighbourhood at its edges to provide transition to adjacent neighbourhoods, while putting forward a new, largely mid-rise neighbourhood with some taller buildings located on top of mid-rise base buildings. The plan locates different scales of development in specific kinds of locations:

- Townhouses abut existing homes in adjacent areas.
- Mid-rise buildings frame the edges of the primary streets and larger parks.
- Taller buildings surround the Lawrence West subway station, Lawrence Avenue West and Allen Road and result in the highest development densities on blocks closest to the Lawrence West subway station.

The scale of development is determined by an appropriate transition in built form to the adjacent stable neighbourhoods of the study area, as well as the relationship of built-form to public spaces to contribute to a comfortable public realm. In addition, buildings in the Plan cannot be taller than the height restrictions that result from the flight path to the Downsview Airport.

V. GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION OVER 20 YEARS

The Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan takes a 20-year perspective to guide long term growth and change. This matches TCHC's expected timeframe for redevelopment of lands within Lawrence Heights. The Revitalization Plan provides for a total of up to 7,500 residential units (including 1,208 replacement social housing units) to be constructed on lands owned by TCHC, TDSB, the City of Toronto, and RioCan.

Over the next 20 years, two thirds of Toronto's growth will happen outside of the downtown. The City's Official Plan steers this reurbanization to areas which are well served by transit, the existing road network and which have properties with redevelopment potential. It sets a framework for creating new neighbourhoods through comprehensive planning for the reurbanization of underutilized lands.

The transformation of the Lawrence Heights community into a mixed income, mixed-use neighbourhood is informed by past successes in areas such as the St. Lawrence neighbourhood. The level of residential density anticipated in the Focus Area by the 2030s will be similar in density and form to that of St. Lawrence and the neighbourhoods that surround it. The ongoing redevelopment of Regent Park follows a similar form and level of density.

A more incremental type of change will continue to occur on the Avenues that frame the Lawrence-Allen area – Lawrence Avenue West, Bathurst Street, and Dufferin Street. This context is quite different from the one which surround the St. Lawrence neighbourhood or Regent Park, and the Revitalization Plan reflects that difference, guiding and supporting growth and change in a way that is particular to the Lawrence-Allen context.

This neighbourhood evolution expected in Lawrence-Allen is consistent with plans for growth and change in other parts of North York, such as the Sheppard East Subway Corridor. Further south in Toronto, established neighbourhoods such as the Annex experienced a similar transformation at previous stages of their development. While each of these three areas has its own unique attributes, they display similar levels of residential density and a mix of building types. They each include a mix of stable neighbourhoods complemented by higher intensity developments around subway stations and along important corridors, which provide all residents with a variety of choices and amenities.

VI. STABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS IN LAWRENCE-ALLEN

The transformation of Lawrence Heights does not set a pattern for other neighbourhoods in Lawrence-Allen. These neighbourhoods to the east, northeast and west of Lawrence Heights are stable and will see little physical change over the next 20 years. The Revitalization Plan confirms their existing physical character. The Avenues which surround Lawrence-Allen will continue to evolve and grow incrementally over the course of the Revitalization Plan, providing a range of amenities to surrounding communities.

Chapter 4 will describe in greater detail the planning and policy directions which will guide the evolution of Lawrence-Allen, ensure that Lawrence Heights becomes a desirable neighbourhood with a high quality of life, and that the revitalized Lawrence Heights continues to be a good neighbour to other communities within the Lawrence-Allen area.

Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan REVITALIZATION PLAN



Figure 12: Lawrence-Allen Revitalization Plan