

Weston 2021 Design Charrette / may 2011

Part 1 of the Weston 2021 Initiative led by the City of Toronto





CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---------|
| Overview..... | page 02 |
| Site Description..... | page 04 |
| Background | page 05 |
| Key Messages From the Public Workshop..... | page 06 |
| Key Messages From the Focus Groups | page 07 |
| Key Design Directions | |
| • Overall Central Weston Community..... | page 08 |
| • Focus Area 1- Weston Town Centre | page 14 |
| • Focus Area 2- Metrolinx Station Area | page 18 |
| • Focus Area 3- Tower Renewal Area | page 22 |
| Appendices..... | page 27 |
| 1. Charrette Agenda and Invitation | |
| 2. Design Charrette Information Sheet | |
| 3. Weston 2021 - Design Initiative Overview | |
| 4. Participant Feedback Summary | |
| 5. Design Group Presentations | |

OVERVIEW

WESTON DESIGN INITIATIVE

The Weston 2021 Design Initiative is a long-range, neighbourhood revitalization effort being coordinated by the City of Toronto with the participation of Metrolinx. The Weston 2021 Design Initiative consists of three parts:

- **Design Charrette.** A focused effort that allows a large number of ideas to be quickly explored and then distilled into a few key, practical short and long-term design objectives. The design charrette was a three day event, held between May 3rd to May 5th, 2011 at the Yorkwest Active Living Centre, 1901 Weston Road. Working sessions were open to public and involved the community, key stakeholders and City of Toronto staff.
- **Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP).** A review in detail of the development opportunities for one or more key neighbourhood sites by volunteer members of the Urban Land Institute. The TAP workshop was held between the May 16th to May 17th, 2011. The TAP Panel report is the subject of a separate report.
- **Weston 2021 Action Plan.** Both the Charrette and ULI TAP reports will serve as the background for a more intense and involved effort led by the City of Toronto. The intent of the Action Plan is to guide revitalization, redevelopment and capital improvements.

PURPOSE OF THE CHARRETTE

The aim of the charrette was to provide inspiration for how the village of Weston can position itself to grow and thrive over the next decade. The results for the Charrette will inform the ULI TAP and the Weston 2021 Action Plan.

PARTNERS

The partners who contributed to the development and organization of this event included:

- Office of Councillor Frances Nunziata
- City of Toronto (Planning, Urban Design, Tower Renewal)
- Metrolinx
- Swerhun Facilitation & Decision Support
- Urban Land Institute (ULI Toronto)
- du Toit Allsopp Hillier
- Urban Strategies
- Fleisher Turner and E.R.A Architects



Public workshop



Design Charrette working session

CHARRETTE STRUCTURE

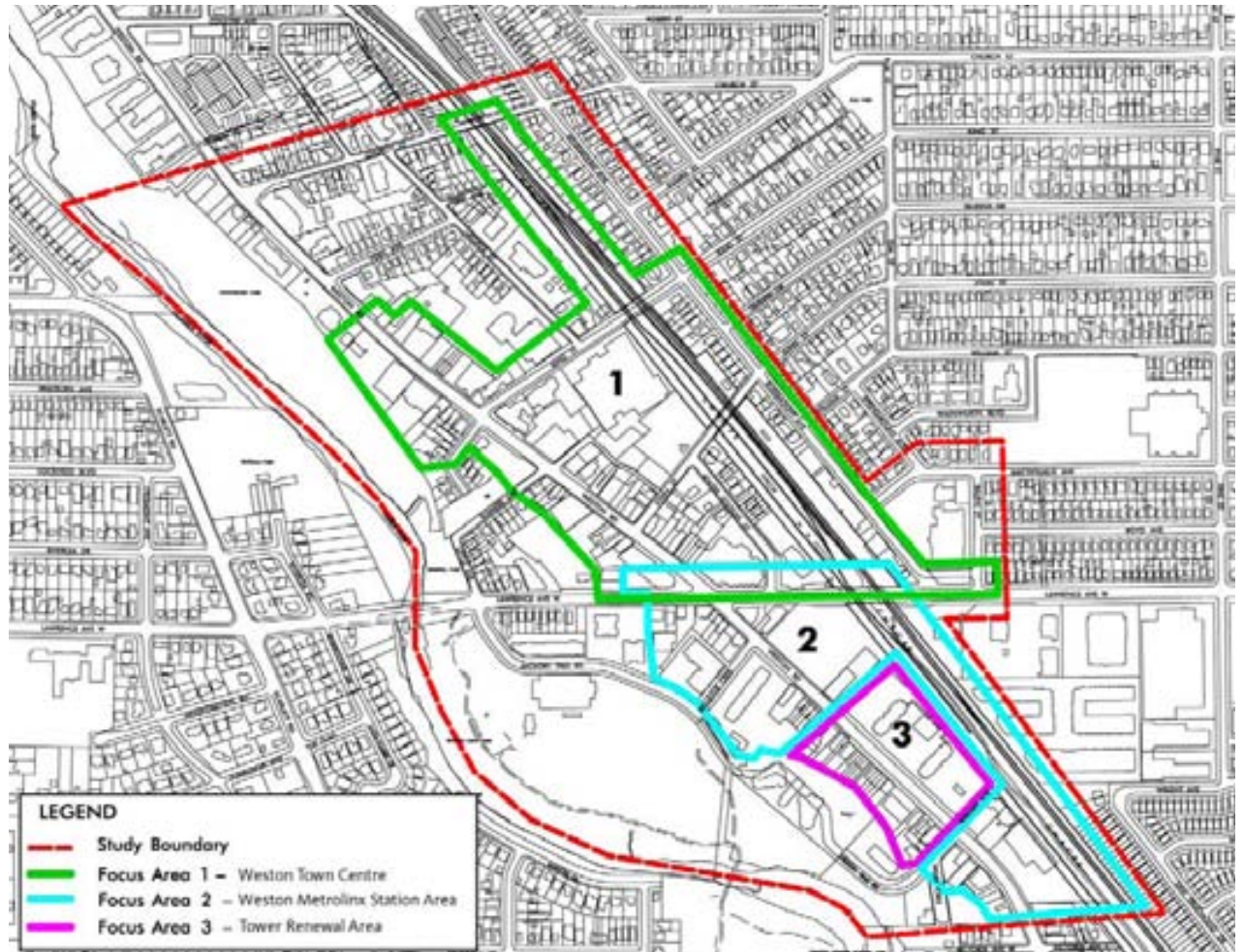
The charrette schedule was structured into the following 3 parts:

A. Public meeting - Participants identified key issues that should be considered by the design teams, current strengths and weaknesses of Weston and ideas for the vision of Weston's future.

B. Central Weston Community - Development of circulation plans, parks and open space and streetscaping plans.

C. Detailed design concepts - design work focussed on the following three areas:

1. **Weston Town Centre** – The area around Weston Road north of Lawrence Avenue West.
2. **Weston Metrolinx Station Area** – The area of the new Go and Air Rail Link Stations southeast of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West.
3. **Tower Renewal Area** – The apartment towers at 1765-1775 Weston Road.

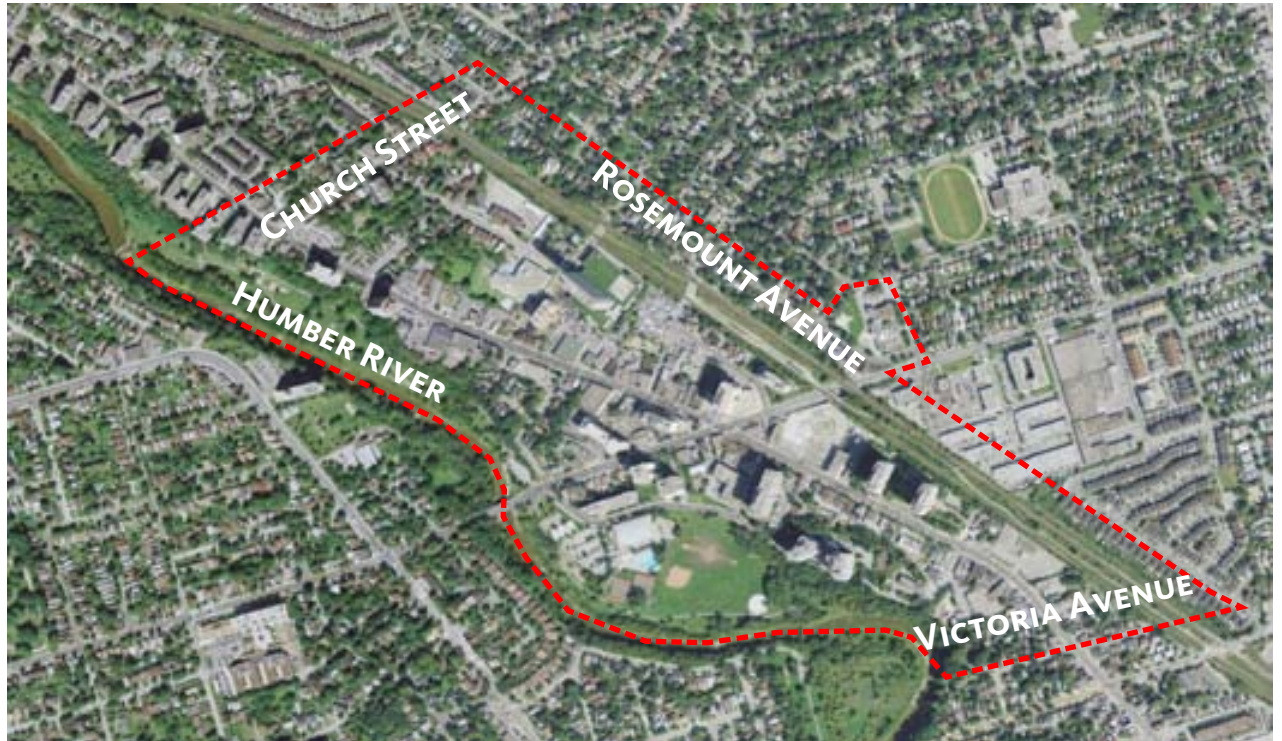


Weston 2021 Design Charrette focus areas

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is defined by:

- The Humber River to the west.
- Church Street to the North.
- Victoria Avenue to the South.
- Rosemount Avenue / Sam Frustaglio Drive to the East including Lawrence Business Park and CR Marchant Middle School.



Aerial photograph of the site

BACKGROUND

Weston is an area in Toronto with a rich history as a community. The community has grown and evolved since it was first settled in the 1800's. The key background events leading up to this Design Initiative are:

- Weston was a thriving independent village with several local industries that formed the backbone of the local economy until the 1960's-70's when industrial uses began leaving the area.
- In 1967 Weston became part of the Borough of York and in 1998 it was amalgamated into the City of Toronto.
- Today Weston is recognized as a Priority Neighbourhood by the City of Toronto. It is an area in need of revitalization.
- Metrolinx is building an Air Rail Link between Pearson International Airport and Union Station with bi-directional transit service every 15 minutes. A stop at Weston Station is planned as part of the project.
- Resident concerns around the new transit services include road closures, frequent train traffic and the relocation of the existing GO Station to south of Lawrence Avenue.



Present day Weston Road



Historic Main Street Weston.
Image courtesy of the Weston Historical Society



The Humber River



Main & Dufferin (Weston & Lawrence) 1907.
Image courtesy of the Weston Historical Society

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE PUBLIC WORKSHOP

STRENGTHS

- Weston is a walkable neighbourhood.
- Historic low rise scale of Main Street gives Weston an unmistakable identity of a town.
- The Humber River Park and trail is an incredible neighbourhood and city wide asset.
- The Farmers Market, held at the Toronto Parking Authority surface parking lot (TPA lot) is a positive community event.
- There is a large community orientated residential base within the neighbourhood.
- The new GO Station will improve rail connections to downtown and the airport.
- Unique heritage.

CHALLENGES / WEAKNESSES

- Lack of connectivity, not only physical connections but also between forms of transit (i.e. TTC and GO).
- Lack of community cohesion (i.e. social, economic and cultural).
- Weston Road streetscape is in poor condition and is uninviting. Sidewalks are narrow and street furniture does not facilitate discussion.
- Concerns about safety and perception of crime.
- Lack of community space and underused community spaces.
- The business mix along Weston.
- Poor access to open spaces.
- The rail corridor is seen as a barrier.
- Poor pedestrian environment at the corner of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue.
- Schools are overcrowded.
- Loss of vehicle connection along John Street resulting from depression of rail tracks.

VISION

- More connectivity, not less.
- Improved access to parks and open spaces.
- Strengthen east/west connections.
- Improve community cohesion.
- Improve connections across the rail corridor.
- Institutional/ education facility that increases street activity in a positive way.
- Rejuvenate the businesses along Weston Road.
- Reinstate the pattern of blocks and streets to improve connectivity.
- Create a bicycle identity for the area (i.e. retail, bike transit, bike repair, bike museum, Bixi bikes, bike lockers).
- Transform the dark tunnel below the tracks at Lawrence Avenue into a positive space.

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

FOCUS GROUPS

During the Charrette focus groups were conducted with:

- Local businesses
- Development community
- Resident leaders
- Community services
- Heritage
- Local schools

THE KEY MESSAGES

- There is a need to revitalise Main Street.
- A need for catalyst development within the community. The Weston GO Station and the future development of the TPA site can act as catalyst for revitalization.
- There is a need for catalyst public spaces.
- New development should relate to the pedestrians through commercial/ retail uses at street level.
- Focus on markers that trigger investment. The markers typically start with social drivers such as artists, coffee culture etc.
- Provide investment certainty. Establish open space allocation and density targets as first steps.
- Quality urban environment and public spaces can be a catalyst for attracting investment.
- Public investment will need to be funded by the private sector.
- Community connections between Weston and the larger area.
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).
- Community space is needed. I.e. youth, children, seniors etc.
- Restoration of the key heritage assets, including Weston Road would improve the identity of the community.



View looking towards 31-35 King Street



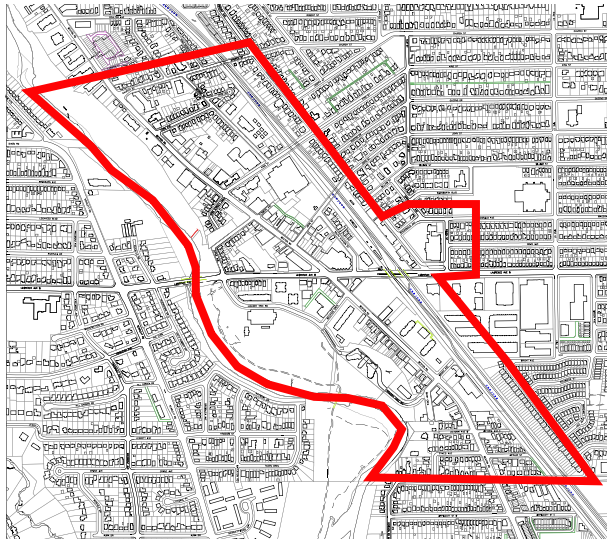
Little Avenue



1765-1775 Weston Road

OVERALL CENTRAL WESTON COMMUNITY

KEY DESIGN DIRECTIONS



Location plan

The key issues identified for the Overall Central Weston Community are:

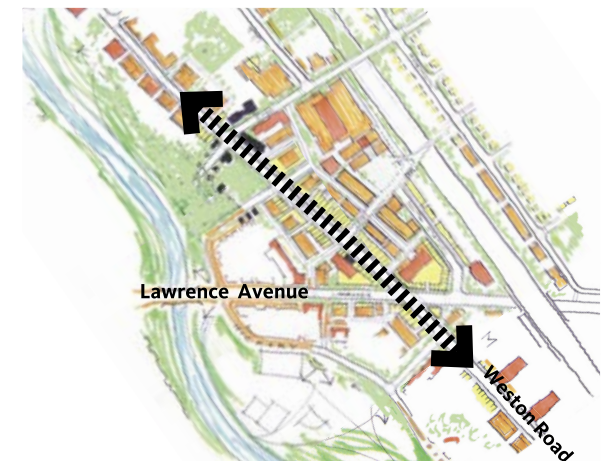
- The low rise scale and finer grain of frontages along the Main Street were viewed as distinctive and characteristic of Weston Village. However, the streetscape is in poor condition, development fronting the street has been uncoordinated and the local business mix could be better.
- A lack of safe street routes in the neighbourhood and concerns about perception of safety.
- Lack of connectivity between destinations and open spaces, particularly the Humber River.
- Lack of community cohesion.

The 4 key design directions identified for the redevelopment and regeneration of the Weston Community area are:

- Main Street revitalization - Many communities - ONE Main Street
- The 'Village' - a finer grain of streets and lanes.
- Linking the Metrolinx Station to the Farmers Market.
- Network of open spaces - the Emerald Necklace

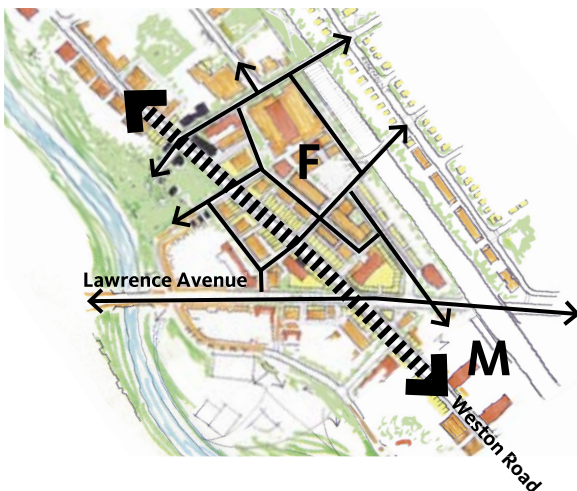
1. Many Communities - ONE Main Street

- Weston Road Streetscape and shopfront improvements to create an attractive destination and reinforce the identity of Weston Road as the central spine linking its surrounding communities.
- Enhance street links and pedestrian routes connecting with Weston Road to improve overall movement through and around the community.
- New developments within the core section of Weston Road to be of a 2-3 story scale similar to the historic scale of Main Street. Either side of the core new developments should be encouraged to rise to 8 storeys (bookend the Main Street).



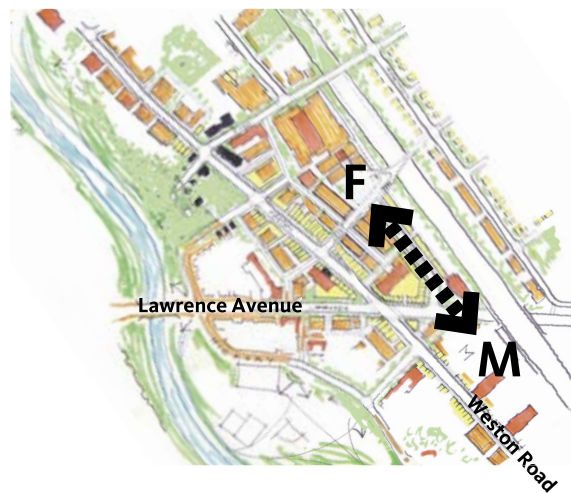
2. The 'Village' - A finer grain of streets and lanes

- Introduce a finer grain block pattern of intimate scaled lane-ways and mews that connect with Main Street, reinforce neighbourhood connections and unlock further development potential.
- Create a new retail/ cultural development at the TPA site (F).
- Active frontages on ground floor level.
- New open space in the form of a plaza, square or Market Street for the farmers market and community/ cultural events. There are opportunities for the Market to spill out onto John Street or down South Station Street.
- 4-6 storey building heights within the 'Village'.
- Elsmere Avenue / King Street and the Metrolinx Station - taller buildings of up to 13 storeys adjacent to the 'Village'.



3. Link the Metrolinx Station to the Farmers Market

- Transform South Station Street into a pedestrian priority street to link the Farmers Market/ TPA (F) site to the Metrolinx Station (M).
- Long term opportunities for live/work artists workshops along South Station Street or for the market to spill out down the Street (similar to Kensington Market, Toronto).



4. Network of Open Spaces - The 'Emerald Necklace'

- Create an 'Emerald Necklace' of heritage tree lined streets to connect a network of open spaces and the Humber River.
- Extend the Memorial Gardens to Main Street to create a new open space and gateway to the Humber River. (E)
- Create a link between the Metrolinx Station and the Humber with a tree lined, pedestrian friendly street along Bellevue Crescent.
- Landscape over infrastructure (K) - New community/ schools green open space over the proposed lid of the depressed railway tracks.



CHARACTER AREAS

Main Street

- Future developments to be of a 2-3 storey in height with narrow blocks similar to existing.

The Village

- Future developments to be 4-6 storeys in height.

Elsmere Avenue / King Street and the Metrolinx Station

- Taller buildings of up to 13 storeys adjacent to the village. A successful example of how a taller building can contribute to the overall urban form without compromising the charm of a finer grained neighbourhood is the Distillery District in Toronto.
- Active frontages on the street level through the use of a podium and set backs to create positive edges.

Bookend the Main Street

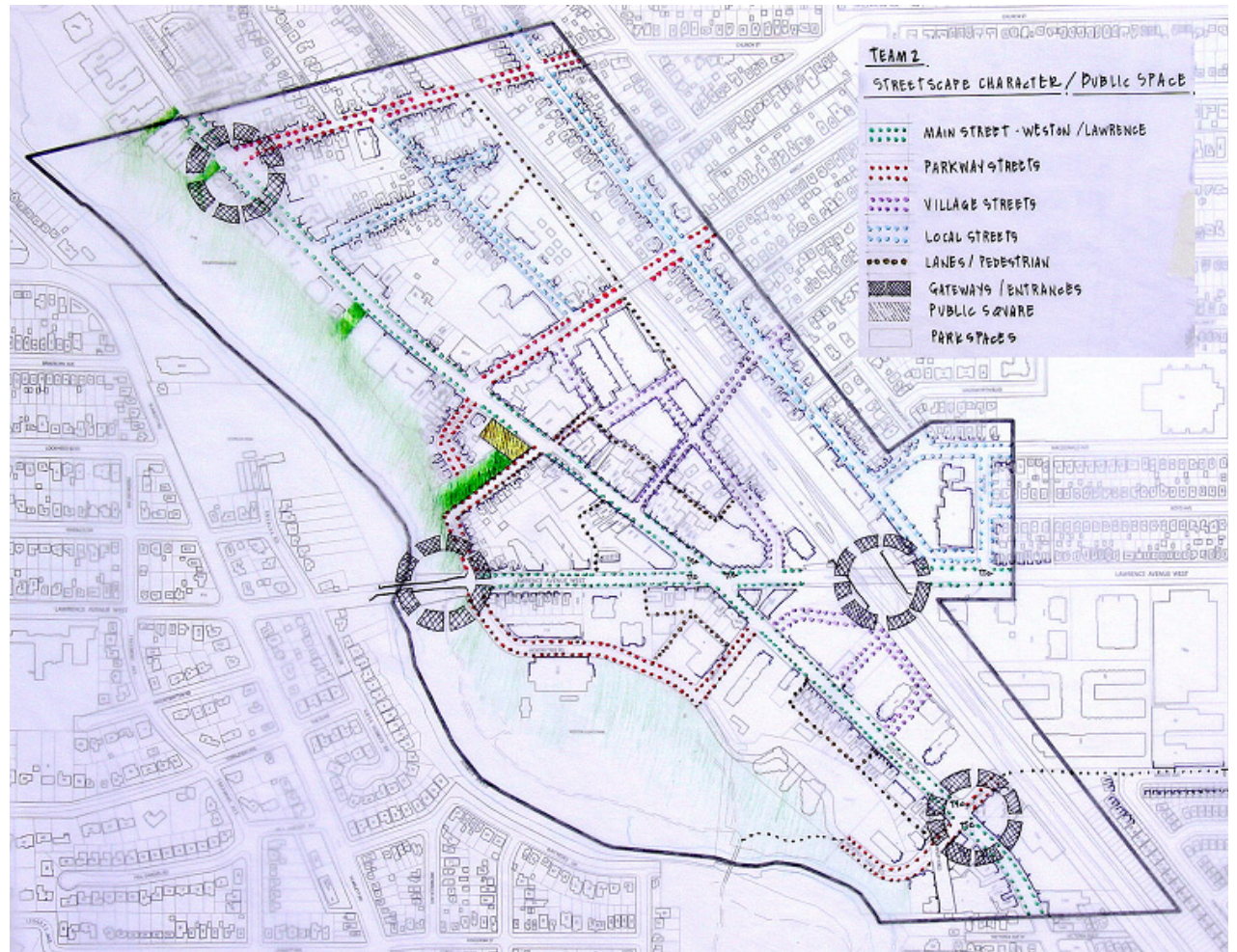
- Either side of the core blocks of 2-3 storey frontages along Weston Road, new developments should be encouraged to rise to 8 storeys.



Streets are a major contributor to the urban public space system. A streetscape plan identified possible new streets, lanes and gateways.

Direction

To develop an accessible network of streets and public spaces that respond to and reinforce the neighbourhood's varied character.



Streets plan

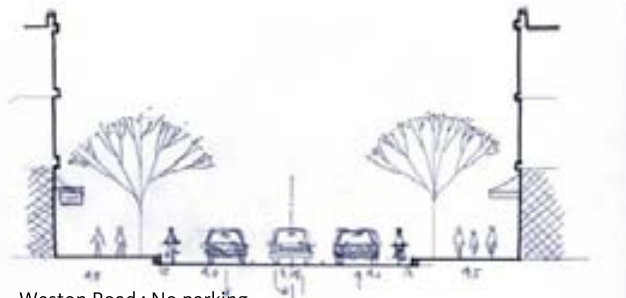
STREETSCAPE CHARACTER

Main Streets: Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue

- Improve the quality and character of materials, details and furnishings on the pedestrian boulevards. Urban in character, primarily retail commercial uses at grade.

Weston Road – 2 Options – 20 m public right-of-way:

- With Parking – 2 bike friendly through travel lanes, 2 parking lanes, 4.0 m boulevards, suitable street tree soil volumes.
- Without Parking – 2 bike friendly through travel lanes, a full time centre left turning lane, 4.5 m boulevards, suitable street tree soil volumes.



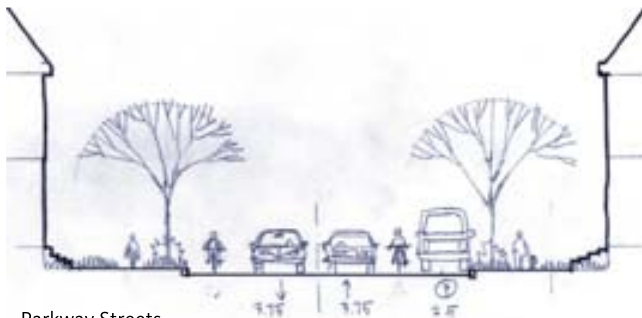
Weston Road : No parking



Weston Road : With parking

Parkway Streets

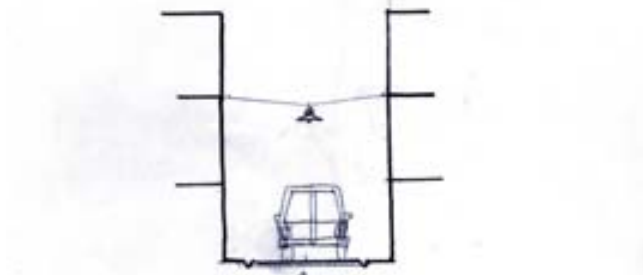
- (King, Church, Wright/Hickory Tree, Bellevue Crescent).
- Streets that either cross or meet Weston Road and connect to the Humber River corridor parks and open space system.
- Improve the quality and character of materials, details and furnishings. Provide suitable street tree soil volumes for planting large canopy trees.
- Demarcate as being parkway streets through the use of street furniture, signs or some other visual means for directing pedestrians, cyclists or vehicles.
- 20 m public right of way using existing curb to curb dimensions.
- Allow for one parking lane and two bike friendly through travel lanes.



Parkway Streets

Lanes

- Rear service lanes or pedestrian lanes.
- 5 to 6 m right-of-way.
- New and existing lanes already in use. Extend the lane network throughout the study area.
- Surface in a higher grade material than asphalt.
- Laneway lighting either in catenary or wall-pack forms.
- Opportunity to use laneways for stormwater management similar to Chicago Green Alleys initiative.



Lanes

STREETSCAPE CHARACTER PRECEDENTS: THE BEST OF TORONTO

The prescription for Weston is to learn from the best and most appropriate streets in Toronto: Keep it simple, use what works and what we know can be done. The Village streets can happen in advance of long-term redevelopment, and support the initial moves such as the Farmers Market and lower density infill.

WESTON ROAD AND LAWRENCE AVENUE = DUNDAS AVENUE WEST IN THE JUNCTION

- Clear footpaths.
- Uncluttered above grade, below grade utilities.
- Simple concrete curbs and pavement in pedestrian boulevards.
- Asphalt travelway.
- Elegant character street lighting at vehicular level.
- Street trees.
- Easy to maintain and replace.

JOHN STREET + SOUTH STATION ROAD = ST. NICHOLAS STREET IN YORKVILLE

- Clear footpaths.
- Uncluttered above grade, below grade utilities.
- Simple concrete curbs and pavement in pedestrian boulevards.
- Interlocking unit paver/Paleotec in travelway.
- Elegant character street lighting at pedestrian level.
- Street trees.
- Easy to maintain and replace.

LANES AND MEWS = ST. JOSEPH STREET IN YORKVILLE

- No sidewalks - Curb and gutter or gutter alone.
- Interlocking unit paver/Paleotec in travelway.
- Lighting either wall mounted or catenary overhead.



Dundas Avenue West



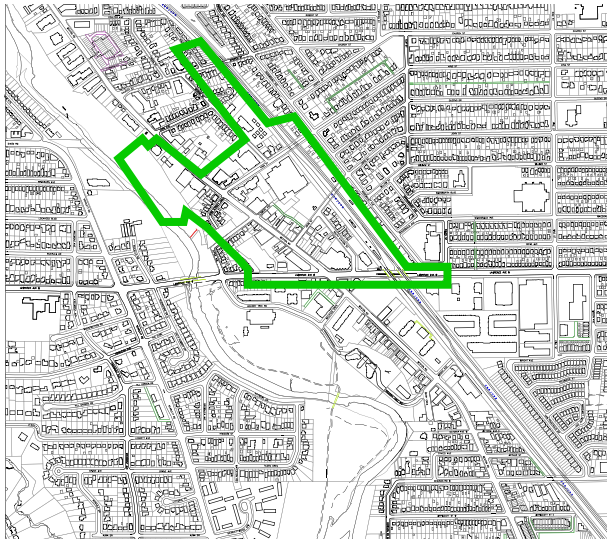
St. Nicholas Street



St. Joseph Street

FOCUS AREA 1 - WESTON TOWN CENTRE

KEY DESIGN DIRECTIONS



Location plan

The 'Village'

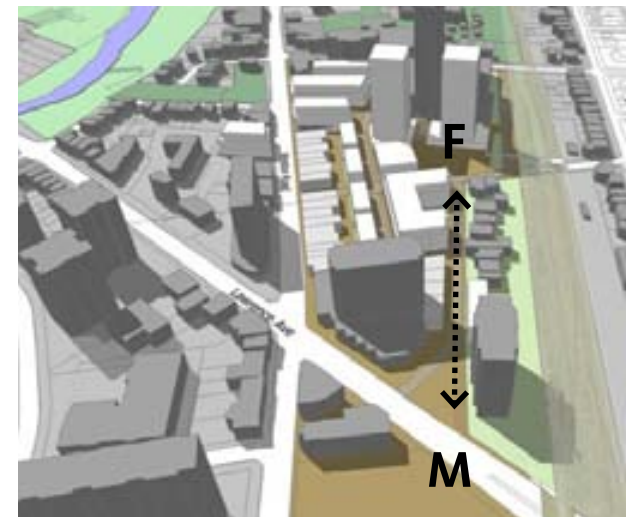
The introduction of a fine grain of intimate scaled lane-ways and mews that connect with Main Street and reinforce neighbourhood connections could unlock further opportunities for development and regeneration.

Direction

- Flexible block pattern, plan of subdivision to provide a framework to direct growth in an overall cohesive manner.
- Block widths and height of new buildings respectful of the historic scale of buildings along Weston Road.
- A fine grain of intimate scaled lane-ways and mews that connect with Main Street and reinforce neighbourhood connections.
- Active frontages - ground floor retail / commercial.
- A new open space in the form of a plaza or square for the Farmers Market located on axis with the Metrolinx Station.
- Transform South Station Street into a pedestrian priority street to link the Farmers Market/ TPA (F) site to the Metrolinx Station (M).



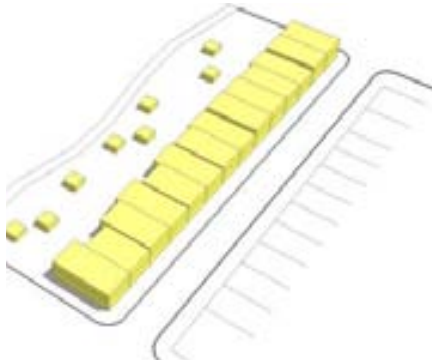
New building heights respectful of historic scale along Weston Road



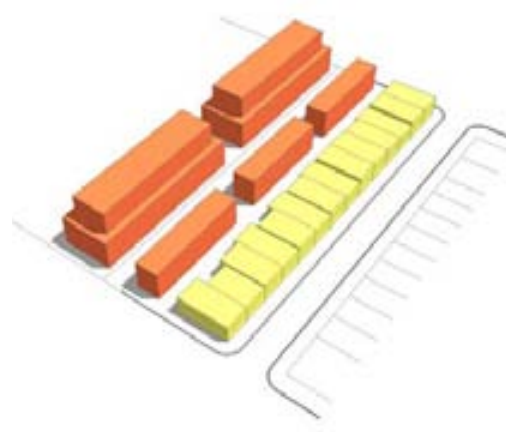
Making a new connection between the Metrolinx Station and the Farmers Market

BUILT FORM CONCEPTS

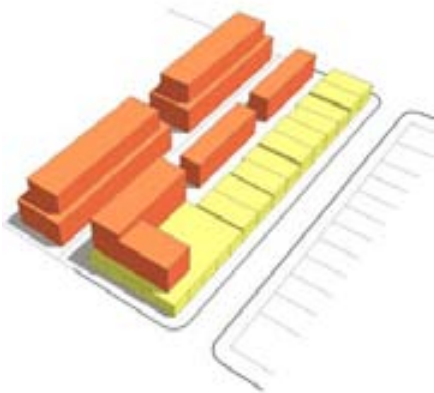
Weston Road - existing 2-3 storeys, low scale fronting Weston Road



New lane with active frontages and 3-4 storeys



Larger floorplate retail on corners



Potential - taller buildings set back from Main Street

