

OAKWOOD- VAUGHAN

City of Toronto

*Program to Promote Economic Revitalization
through Local Capacity Building*



Economic Development and Culture

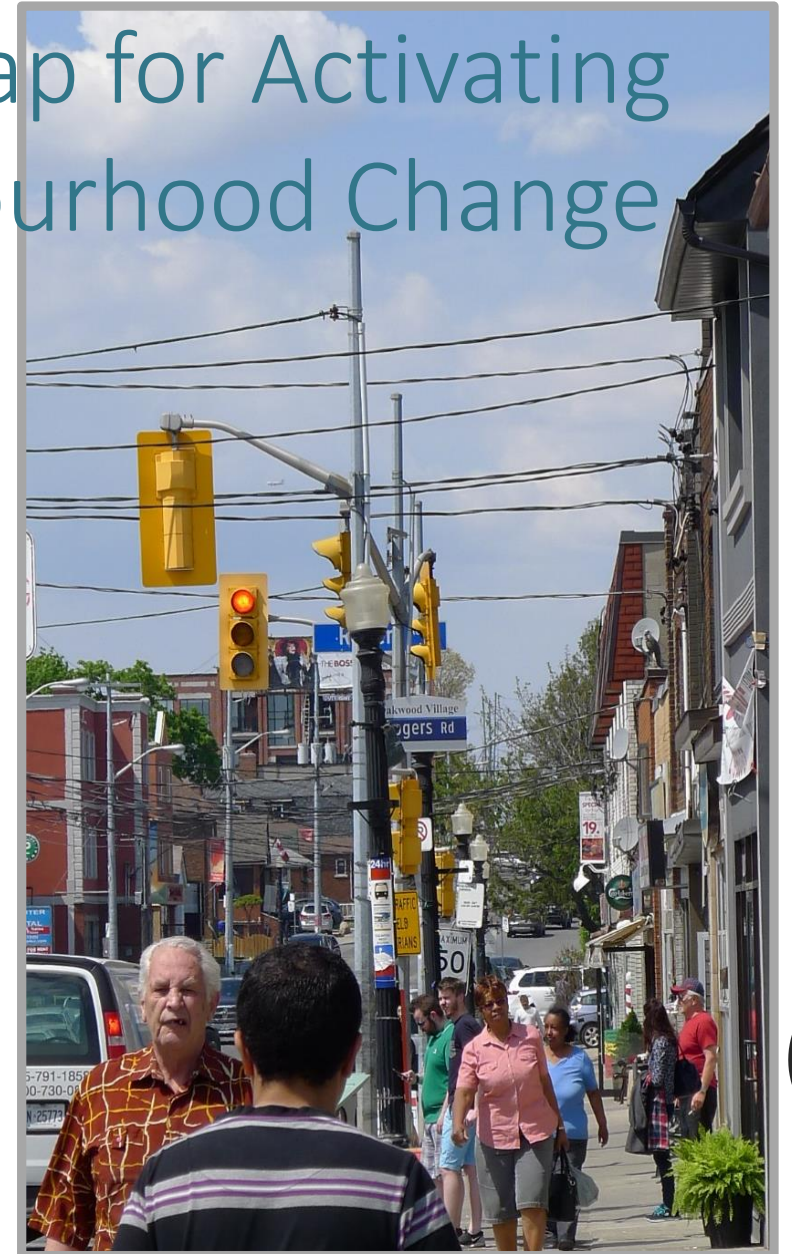


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Road Map for Activating Neighbourhood Change





The Oakwood-Vaughan community is a low-density, low-rise residential area with small-scale retail, service, and office uses located on Oakwood Avenue and Vaughan Road. The area is characterized by a moderate degree of disinvestment: a lack of economic development including vacancy rates at 15%, high storefront turnovers, and issues of high unemployment and petty crime. With a growing residential population, a review was needed to determine how best to encourage and support economic development in this community.

In 2015, in response to two City reports: “Program to Promote Economic Revitalization in Distressed Retail Areas” and the “Oakwood-Vaughan Strategy” City Council directed staff, in collaboration with neighbourhood stakeholders, to develop an Oakwood-Vaughan strategy that would aim to revitalize the neighbourhood by improving social and economic opportunity and overall community well-being. Oakwood Avenue was one of two areas selected as a pilot project area.

In 2016, the Toronto BIA Office commissioned an economic scan of the Oakwood-Vaughan commercial area to identify opportunities for growth. A working group of local stakeholders was formed and subsequently identified key issues and strategies to address them.

Next steps: Toronto City Council to consider the pilot project recommendations

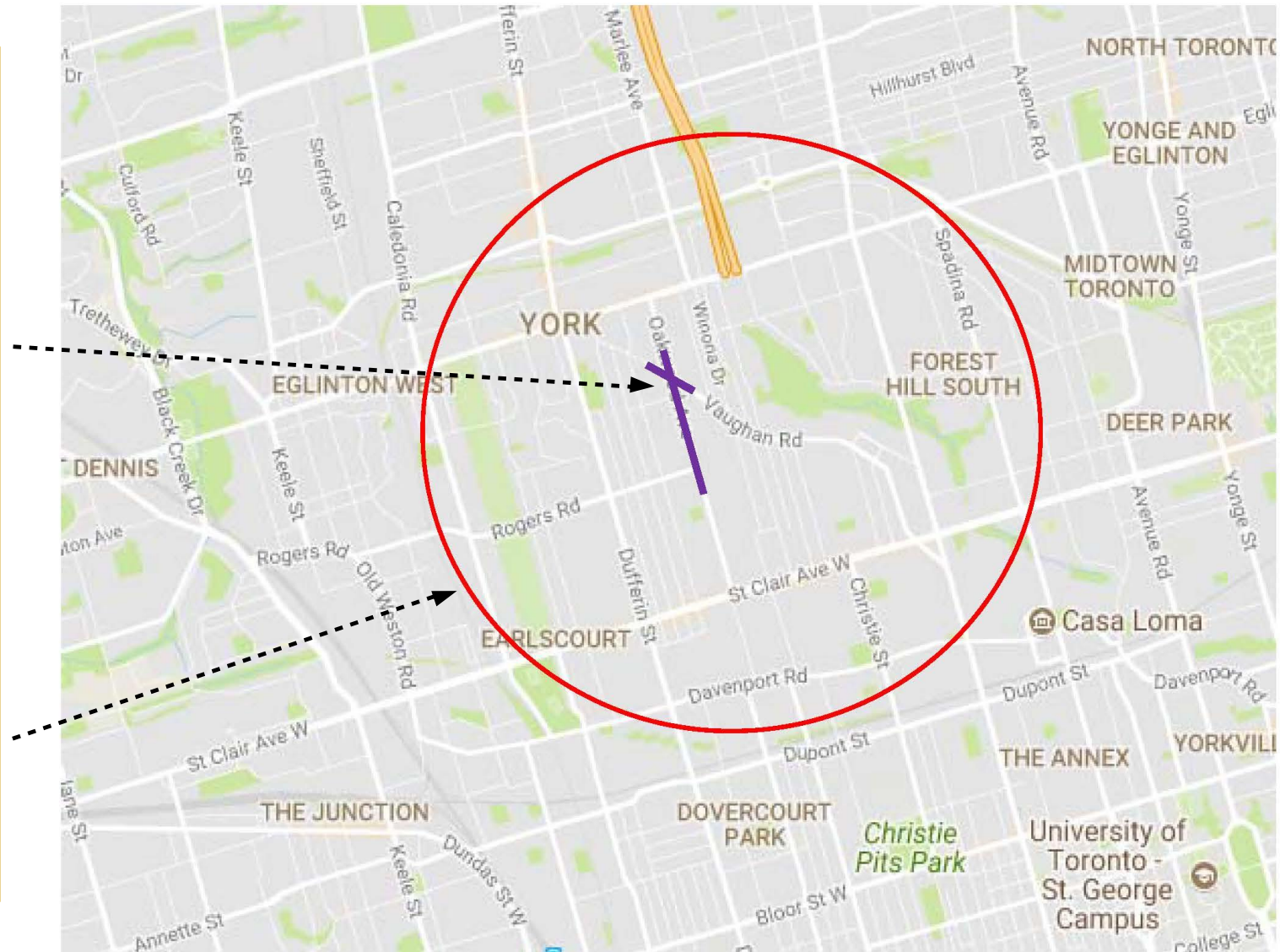
Oakwood-Vaughan Area

Commercial Area

Oakwood Avenue, from Bude Street to Earlsdale Avenue & Businesses within the first block east and west of Oakwood Avenue

Market Area

Davenport Road, Spadina Road, Caledonia Road, and Glencarin Avenue



Oakwood-Vaughan Market Area 2016 Economic Scan

Businesses Today

Based on a street audit, there were approximately 77 stores in the study area

- 29% Cafes, restaurants, bars, fast food
- 15% Business and professional services
- 7% Education
- 15% Vacant

Potential Shoppers Identified

15,921 Daytime population

23% Work from home

24% Work part-time

35,000 Public Transit Users

Retail Types to Prioritize

- Business and professional services
- Ethnically diverse foods and groceries
- Home office

Business Opportunities

Attract a younger demographic, families with children and pets

Encourage over 15,000 daytime workers in the area to shop locally

Encourage local shopping by residents on foot, bike, and transit

Business Attraction & Retention

Encourage local stores to cross-promote and collaborate as clusters; promote area as a whole

Collaborate with property owners and brokers to spark appropriate tenant recruitment

Global Trends to Consider

Capture young workforce

Appeal to diverse populations

Offer authentic, unique retail experience

Appeal to multiple generations

Be technologically relevant

Pilot Project: Oakwood-Vaughan

In 2016, the Oakwood-Vaughan area was selected as a pilot for the City's economic revitalization program for disinvested commercial areas. The program seeks to build local capacity and partnerships to establish a community-leading, highly-effective BIA with the capacity to implement sustainable economic revitalization strategies complimented by its own program. Although the program is targeted at Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, a similar approach can be used in the Oakwood-Vaughan area.



A Brief Overview of Oakwood-Vaughan

In 1924, the construction of a new street railway along Oakwood Avenue brought significant development to this residential area in the former York Township. Small-scale commercial shops and offices serving the local community soon emerged.

Elements for a thriving main street continued to be seen throughout the twentieth century to the present today: Oakwood Avenue is still a busy thoroughfare containing low-rise, mixed use buildings interspersed with various residential, low-rise forms. The Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group's objective is to continue the trajectory of Oakwood as a bustling neighbourhood serving its local community, visitors, and the broader residents of this City.

Figure 1: Oakwood, North of St. Clair, 1924. City of Toronto Archives

Figure 2: Oakwood at Eleanor, South of Vaughan, 1984. City of Toronto Archives



1924 - A Growing Community

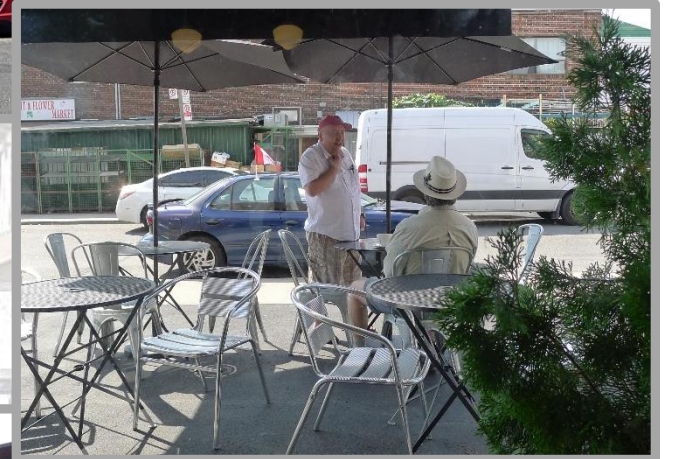


1984 – Main Street Storefronts & Transit

The Oakwood-Vaughan Neighbourhood Today

In 2016, the Toronto BIA Office commissioned an economic scan of the Oakwood-Vaughan area to explore opportunities to improve the public realm and pedestrian experiences as a way to support local economic development. The following overview highlights key findings:

- 100,000 people live in the study area
- 39% are people between 35 and 54 years of age
- 61% are 1-2 persons household
- 11% speak Portuguese as mother tongue; 6.3% Italian; 5.8% Spanish
- \$97,966 is the average household income
- 53% Own; 47% Rent
- 32% have a university degree
- 17% work in sales and service
- 12% work in education, law and social, community, government
- 45% commute by car; 47% public transit; 4% walk; 3% bike
- 84/100 on a walk score (a neighbourhood walkability measure)



ISSUES

The following issues and strategies identified by the Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group are summarized and prioritized as key actions in the subsequent table.

- Business recruitment
- Animate vacant storefronts
- Transit
- Arts district
- Increase community space
- Oakwood-Vaughan as a Comprehensive Neighbourhood
- Lack of area events
- Oakwood Village BIA not effective
- Crime and safety
- Review of unneighbourly liquor license holders
- Communication and technology gaps
- Park improvements
- Streetscape improvements



Working Group

Issues and Strategies Identified

Issues

Strategies

Business Recruitment

- General retail, grocery stores, fresh deli markets, gyms
- Work with real estate agents and broker community
- Co-working spaces
- Promote Toronto Hydro energy efficient programs

Recommendation

Develop a business recruitment strategy to address vacancies and retail mix.



Animate Vacant Storefronts

- Art - "This could be your store painting" program
- Art - "Gallery City" - storefront installations
- Incentives to upgrade interior of businesses
- Vacancy - provide penalty rather than incentive
- Prohibit at-grade commercial to residential conversion in CR zone: provide info kit to property owners
- Pop Up shops
- Develop Façade Program Workshop

Recommendation

Develop a strategy that encourages active use of commercial storefronts.



Transit

- Audit request
- Promote parking lots, on-street spaces, and new signage
- Introduce bus shelters at select locations
- Introduce Bike Share stands
- Develop "Day of Free Parking" promotion
- Promote "walk the neighbourhood" day

Recommendation

Develop a strategy that enables and encourages walking, transit use, and cycling, but also meets the needs of drivers.



Arts District

Recommendation

Encourage and promote initiatives and land uses that support the area's designation as the "Oakwood Avenue Arts District" (approved by City Council in 2008).

- Confirm status
- Arts District
- Develop Oakwood Library theatre troupe residence program
- Develop art crawl
- Garden tour, Canada Blooms tour, Culture tour



Increase Community Space

Recommendation

Support initiatives that build and maintain community-oriented spaces.

- Extend library hours
- Extend and promote recreation programs in library
- Promote NIA space availability
- Vaughan Road Academy Community Hub proposal in development
- Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Satellite Service proposes to bring in health services to 501 Oakwood Ave.



Work Towards Oakwood-Vaughan as a Comprehensive Neighbourhood

Recommendation

As various divisions undertake area initiatives that they recognize Oakwood-Vaughan as a complete neighbourhood

- Safety audit
- Clean up day in 2018
- Address current boundaries that divide Oakwood-Vaughan into separate service areas (i.e. ward boundaries)
- Define and treat Oakwood-Vaughan as one area
- Equalize service levels regardless of city boundaries



Lack of Area Events

Recommendation

Develop festivals and events based on area priorities consistent with proposed arts district designation.

- Pumpkin Parade in Oakwood Village
- Hanson Road street party – provide support
- Tree lighting in parkette, Charles Brereton park, and Oakwood/Vaughan island
- Flash mob (by local ballet school)
- Develop Christmas lights contest
- Carolling
- School Fun Fair, 1 per season, community based
- Jane's Walk
- Revive the Oakwood Street Fair
- Establish a weekly farmers' market at the former Vaughan Road Academy



Oakwood Village BIA Not Effective

Recommendation

That the Oakwood-Vaughan BIA Board, once meeting regularly, consider and adopt elements from this plan that it determines are appropriate to its mandate and priorities.

- Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group provide support to the BIA in partnership with other City divisions



Crime and Safety

Recommendation

That the Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group become a member of the local Community Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) to highlight Oakwood-Vaughan specific issues in order to increase safety and reduce crime.

- Enhanced police enforcement and engagement while remaining considerate to local concerns for the potential of over-policing



Issues

Strategies

Review of Unneighbourly Liquor License Holders

- Zoning process for good operators
- Licensing process for good neighbours

Recommendation

For short-term issues, work with the City of Toronto Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) to address area liquor licensing issues. Work with City Planning and MLS to address long-term issues.



Communication and Technology Gaps

- Neighbourhood WiFi
- Digital Main Street
- Neighbourhood App

Recommendation

Work with Digital Main Street and recruit member businesses to take advantage of the various program elements to benefit small businesses.



Park Improvements

- Charles Brereton Park Improvements
 - Improve/animate Oakwood frontage
 - Add playground equipment
 - Elements to encourage greater use
 - Pumpkin parade
- Farmers market, crafts, etc.
- Dog friendly
- Splash pads
- Holland Park Block Party

Recommendation

That a local residents association or the non-business members of the Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group consider pursuing park improvement issues.



Streetscape Improvements

Recommendation

That the Oakwood Village BIA consider the streetscape improvements prioritized by the Oakwood-Vaughan Working Group and laid out in the streetscape appendix of this report.

- General greening - add more trees on public and private properties, planters, hanging baskets
- Street cleaning more frequently
- Pedestrian scale lights
- Benches at select locations
- Public art, murals, "arts district" street signs, Bell box murals, recorded music on light poles; holiday decorations
- Green P lot frontage improvements
- Beer store and fire hall improvements
- Consider branding the Oakwood-Vaughan intersection as "five points"

THE FOLLOWING FOUR PAGES PROVIDE ADDITIONAL STREETScape DETAILS PRIORITIZED BY THE WORKING GROUP



The Oakwood-Vaughan revitalization area has many opportunities for streetscape improvement. There are many existing BIA assets within the area which have fallen below acceptable maintenance standards. There are multiple options for immediate projects to make a significant impact along Oakwood Avenue and Vaughan Road.

Murals

Murals create a distinctive feature for the neighborhood and activate an otherwise blank wall.

Priority 1

Existing Condition



Example from Parkdale BIA



Parkettes in flanking street Right of Way

Unused City right of way space can be converted to usable space for patrons and members of the community.

Priority 1

Existing Condition



Example from the Dundas West BIA



Public art

Public art brings life and character to the neighborhood.

Priority 1

Existing Condition



Example from Grange Park



Pedestrian light renewal

Repairing and restoring existing pedestrian lights to fully functioning standards.

Priority 1

Existing Condition



Example from Mt. Denis BIA



Increased street furniture

To request more benches, bus shelters and waste receptacles be placed along Oakwood Ave.

Priority 1

Existing Condition



Example from the Little Italy BIA



Painting of bike rings and utility boxes

The introduction of colour and art on utilitarian features within the public realm.

Priority 2

Existing Condition



Example from Trinity Bellwoods BIA



Banners

Replacing existing BIA banners which have fallen into disrepair.

Priority 2

Existing Condition



One of two properly hanging banners



Hanging Baskets

Existing hardware on pedestrian lighting can be used to install decorative flower baskets.

Priority 2

Existing Condition



Example from the Upper Village BIA



Planters

Installation of flower planters within the right of way will help green and beautify the street.

Priority 3

Existing Condition



Example from Grange Park



Pole Wraps

Installation of pole wraps to prevent graffiti and clutter from flyers.

Priority 4

Existing Condition



Example from the Greektown BIA



Gateway Feature

Installation of a gateway feature to identify the entrances to the area.

Priority 5

Existing Condition



Example from the Emery Village BIA



Revitalization of Charles Brereton Park

Creating a more inviting and interesting frontage for the park along Oakwood Avenue and general improvements to the park.

Long Term Priority 1

Existing Condition



Example from Kew Gardens



Acknowledgements

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