



Background to the Study

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1.1 Study Purpose and Key Municipal Goals

Toronto's post-war Avenues represent some of the city's greatest opportunities to promote residential intensification, job creation and community amenity and revitalization. They are a primary apparatus for realizing the vision set out in Toronto's new Official Plan (OP). While "Avenues" in the city centre successfully function as "main streets" and the central organizing elements of vibrant neighbourhoods, the post-war Avenues have much unrealized potential. For these Avenues, a targeted design framework and clear priorities for investment will leverage ill-defined, underutilized lands and infrastructure to ignite change and create a focal point for the communities they serve. The new OP identifies Avenues as places where reurbanization can stimulate transit supportive "main streets". These are places where new jobs and housing choices should be created; where a mix of uses is encouraged; and, where development potential can be bolstered by appropriate as-of-right zoning and investment in streetscape, infrastructure and public amenities.

In late 2004, the City of Toronto initiated the Danforth Avenue Study to establish a coherent urban design framework supported by regulatory changes as necessary to guide the physical renewal and evolution of Danforth Avenue from a predominantly post-war highway-oriented commercial corridor to a stronger community amenity and main street commercial destination within the Oakridge community. A key objective of the study is to establish an appropriate built form and public realm vision which can renew the civic role of the street and establish a setting to encourage reurbanization and intensification of underutilized sites which do not contribute positively to the overall urban experience along the Avenue. The Study aims to strengthen the sense of place and quality and connectivity of the public realm and urban environment and to attract new uses and amenities to the area by increasing investor confidence in undertaking appropriate intensification projects. A fundamental challenge for the Study was to establish a development framework that is grounded in a solid understanding of the local physical context, current challenges and opportunities, as well as existing and anticipated development interests and constituent needs.

The key city objectives of the Danforth Avenue Study are to:

- Establish a dialogue with the community to identify broad community, business and development goals and expectations;
- Make Land Use recommendations that support the goals of the urban design vision and that will clearly guide amendments to established policies and Guidelines;
- Create an Urban Design Plan and Built Form Guidelines which seek to intensify and unify both sides of the street;
- Establish Streetscape and Public Realm Guidelines for the study area;
- Establish a Transportation strategy to reduce congestion and conflicts between pedestrian areas and pedestrian and vehicular movement, and to guide access, circulation and parking;
- Create a Municipal Real Estate Investment Plan to illustrate where the acquisition or disposition of city owned properties can support the vision;
- Draft Implementation recommendations which include policy and procedural strategies.

More specifically, the Study seeks to:

- determine the future role of the Study Area and the broader area as an automotive sales and service centre node;
- identify the appropriate land uses along the street edge and how the area will evolve toward a more urban and pedestrian-friendly environment if the current land use mix is retained;
- outline the parameters for cohesive, appropriate built form, and its intensity that support the vitality of existing and new retail services;
- determine the appropriate relationship between residential uses and industrial uses on the lands south of the corridor;
- balance how people, bicycles, cars and transit services will access and experience the corridor; and,
- improve the pedestrian experience through carefully planned streetscape and public realm investments.



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1.2 The Local Advisory Committee

The Local Advisory Committee was formed to work with the municipality, the consultant team and the Councillor to define various districts, nodes, and issues within the study area, to discuss and review conceptual development scenarios, and to refine the vision for what the corridor should become over the next 15 to 20 years. The Committee was comprised of:

- Recognized community and business leaders;
- Individuals who participated in the creation of the Community Improvement Plan and Employment Revitalization Plan for the district;
- Members of established resident associations;
- Representatives of the BIA; and,
- Community activists and interested members of the general public.

The Committee met several times with the City and the Consultant Team throughout the course of the study, participated in the Design Charette, were instrumental in representing community needs, concerns and issues on behalf of the larger community, and were involved in decision-making affecting the final outcomes of the study.

1.3 The Project Team

In October of 2004 a multi-disciplinary consulting team was selected to work with residents, development interests, and City staff and to undertake the Danforth Avenue Study and complete a Framework for Community Development for the Study Area. The Study Team was lead by Urban Strategies Inc., a leading firm in areas of planning, urban design, streetscape and open space master planning, supported by BA Group, which undertook the transportation and parking analysis.

To ensure that a realistic and viable vision and urban design framework was developed for Danforth Avenue, Urban Strategies worked extensively with the following departments:

City Departments

City Planning - Community Planning, Policy and Research
Urban Design
Transportation Planning
Technical Services
Economic Development, Culture and Tourism
Forestry & Recreation
Toronto Parking Authority
Toronto Public Library

Other Agencies

Toronto Transit Commission
Toronto District School Board
Toronto Catholic District School Board



1.4 Study Process/Summary of Method

The Danforth Avenue Study was completed in the following three phases of work over an eight-month period:

Phase One:

Research and Investigation focused on understanding the Study Area in its context, gathering relevant background information and documenting existing conditions in order to identify and explore appropriate possibilities for the future. Mapping, architectural foam modeling and other visualization techniques including precedents from other places were developed to convey key opportunities, and illustrate the potential and character of future changes along the corridor.

Phase Two:

Design Charette involved bringing the Local Advisory Committee and the broader public together with the consultant team and several municipal departments to participate in an intensive and interactive full day design charette aimed at conveying work to date and identifying key directions and opportunities for the evolution of the Avenue, its built components and elements of the public realm.

Phase Three:

Draft Final Report documented findings of the work to date, including key results of the design charette to create an appropriate vision and supporting design and policy framework which achieves a clear direction for the future of the Avenue. Key recommendations for implementation, including changes to the regulatory framework, were established and integrated within the final report document.

Key elements of the Work Plan included:

A background review of existing reports, policy documents and directions, and a detailed analysis of existing conditions, including the built environment, the public realm, open space and transportation, both summarized in an Existing Conditions briefing document;

Consultation with stakeholders including residents, the Local Advisory Committee established through the study process, commercial property owners, politicians, city staff, and interested members of the general public;

Development of Planning Principles and a preferred Vision for the study area to direct the reurbanization of Danforth Avenue; and,

Development of the Final report document which includes:

- A Land Use Plan;
- An Urban Design Plan and Built Form Guidelines;
- Streetscape and Public Realm Guidelines;
- A Transportation and Movement Plan;
- A Municipal Real Estate Investment Plan;
- Implementation Recommendations; and,
- Additional Tools.

Our initial scope of work had included creation of a 3 dimensional computer model and simulation of Danforth Avenue but, following discussion and agreement with the city, these were replaced with a 3 dimensional physical model as it was agreed that the physical model would better communicate issues, proposals and initiatives to the general public and was capable of being modified and changed by participants at the charette.

PART 1 Background to the Study



1.5 Summary of Consultation

To inform the outcomes of the Study, a series of consultation events were held at key points in the Study including:

Goals, Opportunities and Challenges Workshop with the Local Advisory Committee to assess broad community goals and the long-term vision for the area, establish key objectives early in the Study process and identify the principles that will define 'What kind of Place the Avenue should be.'

Working Sessions with the City Project Team and the Local Advisory Committee undertaken throughout the Study to review work completed to date, such as the background research, outcomes of the design charette and the components of the draft Final Report, and to identify outstanding issues and the steps necessary to resolve them.

Public Presentations and Meetings undertaken at key stages in the Study process to inform and engage the broader public from the outset, to gain input from local residents and businesses concerning the vision and to receive feedback on issues and opportunities.

Design Charette to share information about the Study area, existing conditions and precedents and possibilities for reurbanization, to present perspectives on the contemporary development market and specific issues or opportunities relevant to the Study area and to discuss, draw and explore potential urban design approaches and possible solutions to address key topics such as land use, built form, transitional relationships, streetscape and public realm, transportation, and pedestrian, cyclist and transit connections.

Interviews with Development Proponents and Key Property Owners to obtain input on the potential use and character of specific sites and the Avenue as a whole, to determine the extent of active redevelopment interest, and to discuss and evaluate the relevance of the vision to specific development interests in the area.

The following briefly describes the consultation process in relation to the work program.

Following preliminary research and investigation, community outreach began with the formation of the Local Advisory Committee, comprised of local residents, and business and development interests along Danforth Avenue to work with the Consultant Team and City staff throughout the Study. The first formal meeting with the Local Advisory Committee was the **Goals, Opportunities and Challenges Workshop on January 12th, 2005**. Discussions with participants showed that the Study context retains many qualities and amenities valued by local residents. However, Danforth Avenue and development along it have taken on the character of a suburban highway or suburban commercial corridor oriented to meet the needs of the automobile, and this is seen as a detriment to the community, pedestrian activity, and to some extent to the businesses located on Danforth Avenue. The workshop/roundtable revealed that many people share a vision for the revitalization of the Avenue: that it can attract appropriate new investment, and become a great place for people to visit. The session identified planning principles, goals and objectives that provide a logical basis for evaluating conceptual options for the Study area.

On **February 28th, 2005** the Consultant Team presented to the **Local Advisory Committee** a summary of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities revealed during the January 12th meeting, the findings from the background analysis and the Preliminary Planning Principles, and suggested opportunity sites and precedents and possibilities for the future. The session included a discussion of and feedback on the findings. The Consultant Team also conducted a **Kick-Off Public Meeting on March 31, 2005** to receive feedback from the general public on the direction of the Study and to inform and invite interested individuals to attend the Design Charette.

The Consultant Team engaged the Local Advisory Committee and members of the public in a full day **Design Charette on April 9, 2005**. The Charette included a presentation by a Toronto developer to illustrate successful and precedent development projects within Toronto, a presentation by the Consultant Team to summarize the project to date and small-group working sessions where participants explored portions of Danforth Avenue in detail. A follow-up debrief meeting with the Local Advisory Committee occurred on June 6, 2005 to discuss the results of the Design Charette and review a set of directions and preliminary recommendations emerging from the Charette. The background research and all consultation events to this point formed the basis of the long-term vision and guided the content of the Study conclusions and recommendations.

Throughout the summer of 2005 the Consultant Team undertook preparation of a Vision, a Land Use Plan, an Urban Design Plan and Built Form Guidelines, Streetscape and Public Realm Guidelines, a Transportation and Movement Plan, and a Municipal Real Estate Investment Plan and the technical analysis to refine these components of the Study. The components of the Framework for Community Development were presented to the Local Advisory Committee on January 2006. Following the Local Advisory Committee meeting the Consultant Team completed and prepared final revisions to all components of the Study.

The Danforth Avenue Study broadly reflects the community's vision for the long term future of the Study area, and provides a framework of recommended actions in order to implement the vision and effect positive change along Danforth Avenue.

The results and recommendations of the Study are targeted for presentation to Scarborough Community Council in May 2006. This report will be accompanied by a report from City staff with recommendations for the implementation phase of the Danforth Avenue Study.

Background to the Study

Phases of work and community involvement

- Team Client Meetings
- ◆ Local Advisory Committee Meetings
- Key Stakeholder Consultation and Public Events
- ◆ Primary Deliverables
- Staff Review Period
- Note: Meeting may involve participation of key municipal, school board and TTC personnel

PHASE 1

Research and Investigation

- 1.01 Project Initiation Meeting and Information Exchange
- 1.02 Review and Synthesis of Background Information
- 1.03 Opportunities & Constraints Workshop with the Local Advisory Committee
- 1.04 Interviews with Key Stakeholders
- 1.05 Design Principles and Precedent Research
- 1.06 Inventory and Analysis of Existing Conditions and Possibilities for the Future
- 1.07 Preparation of PowerPoint Presentation
- 1.08 Work Session with City Project Team and with the Local Advisory Committee
- 1.09 Briefing Document: Existing Conditions Analysis
- 1.10 Development and refinement of Visualization Tools
- 1.11 Corridor Study Kick-Off Public Meeting
- 1.12 Preparation for Design Workshop

PHASE 2

Design Exploration

- 2.01 Design Charette
- 2.02 Design Charette Debrief

PHASE 3

Final Report and Recommendations

- 3.01 Preparation of Draft Final Report and Recommendations
- 3.02 Presentation and Review of Draft Final Report and Recommendations
- 3.03 Preparation of Final Report and Recommendations



