

## VI. PUBLIC REALM & ADJACENT BUILT FORM

This section provides a brief description of the major public realm and adjacent built form elements in and immediately surrounding the Secondary Plan area. The section is organized by sub-areas, generally based on major road segments.

### a) Overview

Land Uses within the Secondary Plan area consist primarily of industrial employment, institutional, municipal transit, and national park uses:

- Industrial lands are owned by Bombardier Aerospace which support their airport manufacturing facility. Bombardier also uses the airport runway for their operations which is partially owned by Bombardier and partially owned by the federal government. The runway is oriented roughly north to south through the geographic centre of the plan area;
- The Department of National Defence (DND) and Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) have offices and training facilities located east of the north end of the Bombardier runway, and fronting on Sheppard Avenue West;
- Between the south end of the Bombardier runway to the west and Allen Road to the east are the Toronto Transit Commission's rail yards, administration buildings and the Wilson Subway Station. These facilities occupy most of the southeast corner of the plan area;
- The Downsview subway station is located at the southeast corner of Allen Road and Sheppard Avenue West on a large vacant parcel owned by the City and for which the majority of the lands are being transferred to a City agency (Build Toronto) for development;
- Parc Downsview Park, Inc. (PDPI) occupies a large portion of the Secondary Plan area. The majority of PDPI's lands are located west of the CN rail line, but they also have lands along the south side of Sheppard Avenue west of the DND facility and along the east side of Allen Road between the TTC yards and the DND lands; and,
- A "big box" retail development lies just south of Wilson Avenue and forming the extreme southeast corner of the plan area. The development includes a Costco and Home Depot, as well as smaller retail buildings accommodating a variety of retail uses. Immediately west of this development are lands which formerly supported a DND armoury and which are now under the authority of the Canadian Lands Company.

b) Major Public Realm and Adjacent Built Form Elements by Sub-Area

i) Sheppard Avenue West, West of Allen Road

Public Realm

Sheppard Avenue is an east/west street, and is identified as an Avenue in the City of Toronto Official Plan. Sheppard generally forms the north boundary of the Secondary Plan area. This section of Sheppard Avenue, between Keele Street and Allen Road, is notable for its break from the overall city street grid, curving around the northern end of the airport runway. This section of the street is crossed by two overpasses: the CN railway line, and a private road linking lands owned by PDPI, the William Baker area which currently supports military housing and the lands being redeveloped for the national urban park.

Sheppard Avenue consists of two travel lanes in each direction. A raised concrete curb divides lanes on portions of Sheppard Avenue between Keele Street and John Drury Drive and between Bakersfield Street and Chesswood Drive. The road pavement expands to allow for turn lanes at a number of intersections, including side streets accessing the Dufferin Keele Employment Area directly to the north of the plan area, access roads to the national park, and at intersections with other major arterial roads such as Keele Street and Allen Road.

The topography along Sheppard Avenue West is generally flat. However, there is a moderate downward gradient between the CN overpass and Keele Street. The change in elevation from the rail line down to Keele Street is approximately 16 metres.

Land Uses and Built Form

On the north side of the street, the lands at the Keele Street intersection and east to Tuscan Gate (just west of the CN rail line) are located within the Secondary Plan area. Lands at the intersection support the William Baker military residential area, beyond which are vacant lands to the east. Between the CN rail line and Allen Road, the lands are primarily developed with industrial-commercial buildings of between two and three storeys in height, with the exception of the hotel and commercial buildings on the northwest and northeast corners respectively of Chesswood Drive which are approximately five to seven stories in height. These developments typically are setback from the street with front yard parking, landscaping or combination of parking and landscaping. These lands are not within the Secondary Plan area.



Figure 27 - Intersection of Sheppard Avenue West and PDPI. (The former DND supply depot on the PDP lands is shown in the distance)

On the south side of Sheppard Avenue West, between Keele Street and Tuscan Gate are PDPI lands which are characterized by open field and scrub along the street edge with the exception of plantings at the Keele Street pedestrian entrance to the national park and the John Drury Drive main vehicle entrance to the national park. West of the CN rail line is open field along the street edge, south of which is the large former military supply depot building surrounded by surface parking and which now supports a flea market and other uses. East of the CN rail line are the airport runway, open field areas and the DND Armoury building and DRDC facilities on either side of Yukon Lane to Allen Road.



Figure 28 - Denison Armoury and Former Guard House

## ii) Sheppard Avenue West, East of Allen Road

### Public Realm

The portion of Sheppard Avenue West east of Allen Road forms the north boundary of the eastern side of the Secondary Plan area. This portion of Sheppard is in alignment with the city's street grid and is also identified as an Avenue in the City of Toronto Official Plan.

### Land Uses and Built Form

Mid-rise residential buildings with ground level commercial uses are the predominant built form along this section of Sheppard Avenue West. Sidewalks are wider than the typical street width of 1.5 metres and trees are planted in the boulevard. These buildings are recent redevelopments which have transformed the character of the street from former low density residential and commercial uses to mid-rise development that supports City objectives related to transit supportive development, growth and intensification on Avenues, and a desirable and pedestrian friendly public realm.

The Downsview TTC subway station is located at the southeast corner of the intersection with Allen Road and the station includes a subway entrance and drop-off area as well as a TTC bus terminal. The Downsview Subway Station terminal building provides the only significant built profile on what is a flat, largely undeveloped City owned parcel extending south and southeast of the station. A very small single story building housing secondary subway station access is located on the north east corner of Sheppard and Allen.

### iii) Wilson Heights Boulevard

#### Public Realm

Wilson Heights Boulevard is a major north/south collector street connecting Wilson and Sheppard Avenues. This street forms the eastern boundary of the Secondary Plan area. This street runs roughly parallel to Allen Road and provides access to residential neighbourhoods to the east. It is an undivided four-lane street, with two travel lanes in each direction. The pavement width expands twice for a centre turning lane at the intersections of both Reiner Road and Sheppard Avenue. At the south end, there is a partially grade-separated interchange with access ramps to Allen Road. As Wilson Heights Boulevard approaches Wilson Avenue from the north it runs directly adjacent to Allen Road, and then curves around the TTC parking lot directly east of the Allen Road/Wilson Avenue overpass.

The north and south sections of Wilson Heights Boulevard between Wilson Avenue and Sheppard Avenue West have narrow sidewalks on both sides, while the middle section of the street has a sidewalk on the east side only. The sidewalk on the east side is separated from the pavement by a grassed planting strip. There are sidewalk crossings at the ramps accessing Allen Road however the turning radii are broad, and the sidewalk widths narrow resulting in an undesirable pedestrian condition.



Figure 29 – Intersection of Wilson Heights Boulevard and Sheppard Avenue West

#### Land Uses and Built Form

The eastern edge of Wilson Heights Boulevard between Reiner Road and Clanton Park Road is characterized by rear lotted residential lots supporting low-rise single-detached dwellings. The street's east edge is defined by an approximately two-metre-high masonry wall between the residential lots and the right-of-way. Across the street, the west edge consists of vacant City-owned land. At the northern end of this portion of Wilson Heights Boulevard, near Sheppard Avenue, are single-detached houses that front onto both sides of the street. At the southeast corner of the intersection of Wilson Heights and Sheppard Avenue, there is a mid-rise residential building with ground level commercial. Some small scale low-rise commercial buildings surrounded by surface parking areas are located at the southwest corner.

### iv) Allen Road

#### Public Realm

Allen Road, or "The Allen" as it is often called, is a north/south six-lane thoroughfare with three travel lanes in each direction divided either by either a concrete barrier or a grassed median. Allen Road was designed as an expressway. The exceptions are at the north end where the street becomes an at-grade road with signalized intersections. The Allen was originally planned and

constructed as part of what was intended to become a highway network connecting Steeles Avenue and areas north of Highway 401 to areas further south, through the city to the waterfront. The north extension to Steeles Avenue and the south extension to the waterfront were never constructed and the Allen currently exists as a major road between Sheppard Avenue West to the north and Eglinton Avenue to the south.

As Allen Road approaches the intersection with Sheppard Avenue, there is one at-grade entrance to Allen Road on its east side from the Downsview TTC subway station parking lot, and a partial at-grade intersection between Allen Road, Wilson Heights Boulevard to the east, and Transit Road to the west. Along with the partial at-grade intersection, Allen Road also has two partial grade-separated interchanges with Transit Road on the west side, and another with Wilson Heights Boulevard on the east. Both interchanges have ramps that provide for uninterrupted traffic flow and consume a great deal of ground area. Just to the south of the Allen Road overpass at Wilson Avenue (and just outside of the plan area) is a major multi-ramp interchange with McDonald-Cartier Freeway (Highway 401).

Allen Road has no sidewalks beyond the two short sidewalk stubs extending a few metres south from the Sheppard Avenue intersection. The Allen Road creates a very wide at-grade intersection with Sheppard Avenue. The remainder of Allen Road is inaccessible to pedestrians.

#### Land Uses and Built Form

The limited number of buildings visible from Allen Road front onto secondary side streets and have generous setbacks from the surrounding street frontages. Most structures are one or two stories in height. The new mixed-use development approved and currently under construction at the northwest corner of Allen Road and Sheppard Avenue (the Idomo site) will result in the development of four buildings fronting Allen Road, Sheppard Avenue West and a new internal street, with a maximum height of 45 metres at the intersection.



Figure 30 - Intersection of Allen Road and Sheppard Avenue West

#### v) Keele Street

#### Public Realm

Keele Street is a major north-south four-lane street, comprised of two travel lanes in each direction, as well as left turn lanes at a number of intersections. Keele Street forms the western edge of the Secondary Plan Area, extending north from the intersection with Tavistock Drive to just north of the intersection with Grandravine Drive. There are sidewalks on both sides of the street, often

separated from the street bed by grass boulevards of varying width and street tree planting where wide enough. A few stretches of sidewalk are located directly adjacent to the street curb.

### Land Uses

Keele Street is flanked on the west by a mix of single-detached homes (some converted to commercial uses), small scale low-rise and mid-rise apartment buildings and commercial plazas. Most of the east side of this section of Keele Street is part of Parc Downsview Park, still largely undeveloped. The northern end of the east side, north of Sheppard Avenue West, is defined by a retaining wall behind which is the William Baker military residential area and wooded lots which are visible from the street. This area is not accessible from Keele Street. Immediately north of the retaining wall is a small plaza behind which is a seniors residence around which are wrapped open fields owned by PDPI.



Figure 31 – Intersection of Keele Street and Sheppard Avenue West (looking north)

### vi) Wilson Avenue

#### Public Realm

Wilson Avenue between Keele Street and Allen Road is identified as an Avenue in the Official Plan. It is an east/west street, located primarily south of the Secondary Plan area. A limited portion of Wilson Avenue between Dufferin and Allen Road is actually within the Secondary Plan area. Development and activities along Wilson Avenue between Keele Street and Allen Road affect areas in and around the study area, as Wilson is a major local commercial street. Sidewalks are generally narrow, there is little in the way of street trees or other landscaping, and buildings are largely separated from the street by surface parking.



Figure 32 – Intersection of Wilson Avenue and Dufferin Street (looking west)

#### Land Uses and Built Form

Existing older development typical to this portion of Wilson Avenue consists primarily of one, two and three-story buildings, often set back from the street frontage with surface parking lots between the building and Wilson Avenue. Most typical of north side of Wilson Avenue are two-and three-story buildings containing residential and/or office uses on the upper floors with retail on the ground

floor. A limited number of new buildings have been built to the front property line, with parking at the rear. This results in buildings being oriented to the street and the sidewalk rather than to a front parking area, which gives a sense of scale and containment to the street and some pedestrian interest at ground level.

Other development along Wilson Avenue include retail plazas and smaller multi-unit residential buildings. Many of the properties on Wilson Avenue have very shallow lot depths (approximately 30 metres) and narrow lot frontages (approximately five metres) which make redevelopment difficult.

A new Volkswagen Dealership and a renovated service station are located at the northeast corner of Wilson and Dufferin. These newer developments provide on-site landscaping and streetscape improvements including street trees and wider sidewalks along their street frontage. Directly across from the Bombardier runway is the large retail development. This development includes the large Costco and Home Depot buildings, but also has smaller retail buildings located along Wilson Avenue which provide windows facing the street. The major entrance to the retail development is from Wilson Avenue, with secondary entrances located off of Billy Bishop Way which is a street that wraps around the development linking Wilson Avenue to Dufferin Street. The entrance to the retail development from Wilson Avenue has a pedestrian crossing signal.

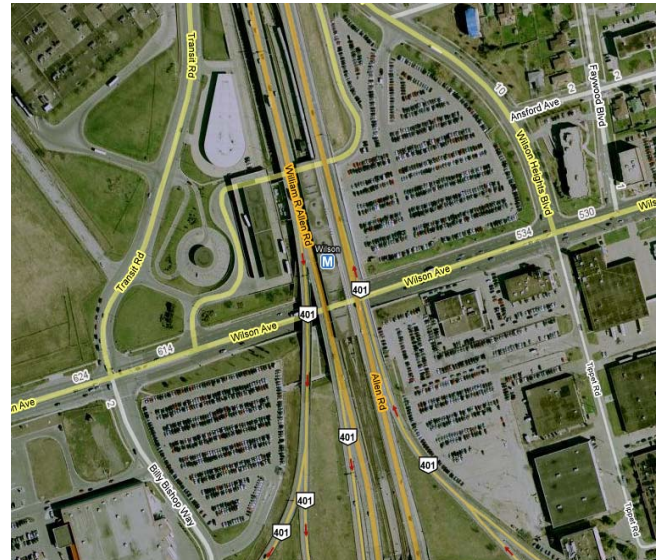


Figure 33 - Wilson Avenue at Allen Road

Just east of the Secondary Plan area, at Wilson Avenue and Tippet road, applications are currently being evaluated which propose to redevelop lands for residential uses. These applications have the potential to introduce mid-rise residential buildings with commercial uses at grade facing Wilson Avenue, providing for intensification near a subway station and on an Avenue similar to what has occurred along Sheppard Avenue West near the Downsview Subway Station.

#### (vi) Ancaster Neighbourhood

##### Public Realm

The Ancaster neighbourhood is located just north of Wilson Avenue, between Dufferin Street and Murray Road. It is a neighbourhood of single detached houses around which the Secondary Plan area boundary 'wraps'. Its streets are laid out following the orientation of the city street grid. All streets within Ancaster have sidewalks on at least one side of the street, and many of the north-south streets have sidewalks on both sides and are lined with mature trees.

## Land Uses and Built Form

Most houses have front driveways that extend from the street curb to a carport or garage. A newer residential development on the east side of the neighbourhood along Beffort and Keswick Roads has extended the neighbourhood grid of streets and consists of homes larger than typical of the older neighbourhood. A number of the residential lots are accessed via a rear lane, allowing for a pedestrian realm and yards in front of these properties that are unbroken by driveways. The neighbourhood also has a park and a community centre which create a focal point for the neighbourhood. The Ancaster neighbourhood is immediately adjacent to the study area, bounded by the Bombardier Plant directly to the north, the airport runway to the east, and the CN rail line and industrial uses along the rail line to the west. Access and linkages within the study area are blocked by these physical barriers.

### vii) Keele and Wilson Area

#### Public Realm

The intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue is very busy, handling a substantial amount of car, bus and pedestrian traffic. It is located just north of the Keele Street/401 expressway interchange. Both Wilson Avenue and Keele Street have two travel lanes in each direction, with left and right hand turn lanes at the intersection for all four directions of traffic. Bus stops for each direction are on the far side of the intersection within traffic lanes. Pedestrian crossings are well marked. Near to the intersection, street trees are generally located in boulevards between the curb and sidewalk.

#### Land Uses and Built Form

The lands at or near the intersection of Keele and Wilson contain a mix of uses. On the northwest corner are smaller sites which support commercial uses. North of the intersection, on the east side of Keele Street a ten storey residential building has just been developed. This development is located at and facing Keele Street and the building steps down to the west to transition to low density residential neighbourhoods.

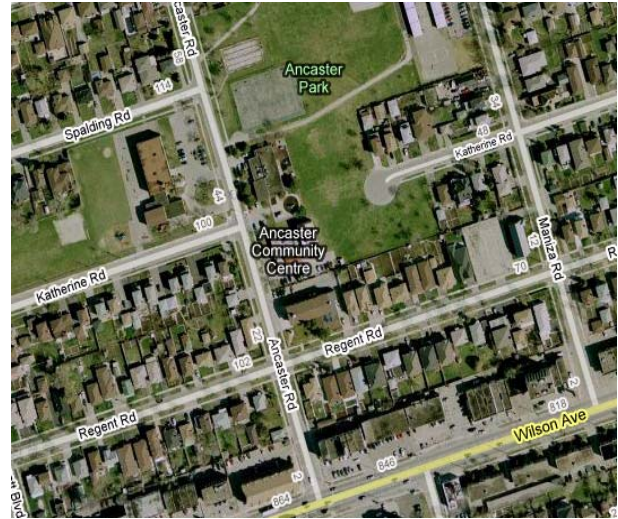


Figure 34 - Ancaster Neighbourhood



Figure 35 - Keele Street and Wilson Avenue intersection

The northeast corner of the intersection is occupied by a small parkette. The Downsview Heritage Parkette commemorates the service of Canadian veterans and provides trees, landscaping, seating, public art, the veterans' memorial, and a new bus shelter for bus transit northbound on Keele Street. Behind the parkette is a commercial plaza surrounded by a large surface parking area. The Downsview public library is located north of the plaza, fronting onto Keele Street. A pedestrian crossing is located on Keele Street in front of the library which is characterized by a pedestrian refuge area in the middle of the street. Just north of the northeast corner of the intersection is a residential enclave of single- and semi-detached houses, and two- to three-storey apartment buildings.



Figure 36 - Intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue

At the southwest corner is a small commercial plaza. To the south of the plaza is an OPP building and wrapping around the plaza with frontage on both Keele Street and Wilson Avenue is a large provincial landholding currently occupied by Ministry of Transportation offices and a large surface parking area. The provincial government has announced plans to redevelop the lands to add a large regional hospital, a forensics facility and additional office development. At the southeast corner are a service station and small commercial uses along Wilson Avenue. On the Keele Street frontage south of the intersection to Highway 401 is a residential condominium building and a stacked townhouse development.