

O'CONNOR DRIVE

# URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES



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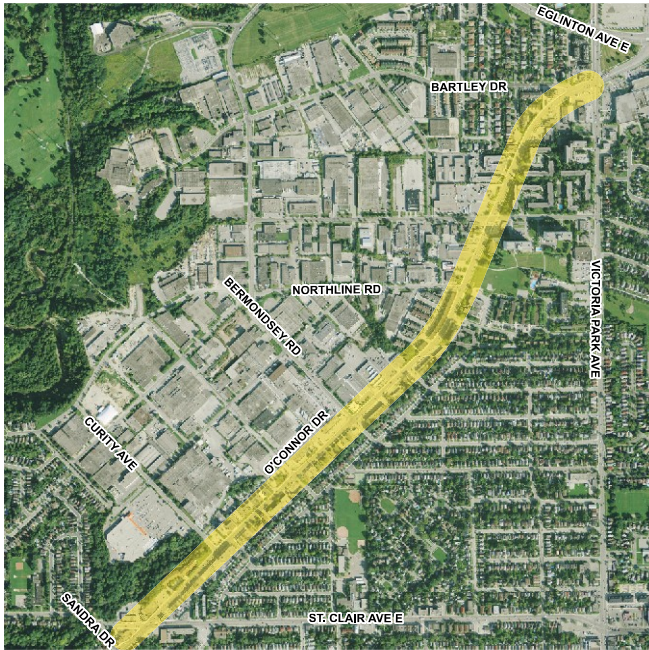


Figure 1: Aerial photo showing the study area: O'Connor Drive from St. Clair Avenue (south) to Victoria Park Avenue

## 1.0 PURPOSE

Development along O'Connor Drive between Victoria Park Avenue and St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road will be consistent with the following public realm and built form guidelines. These guidelines will provide a framework for development within the area and are to be read in conjunction with the policies in the Official Plan.

## 2.0 LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

These guidelines apply to the lands fronting onto O'Connor Drive between Victoria Park Avenue at the north and St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road at the south (Figure 1). O'Connor Drive is the primary pedestrian and commercial area for the adjacent neighbourhoods and the O'Connor/Bermondsey Business Area. It also functions as a through route for traffic and transit moving between downtown Toronto and the east end of the city.

O'Connor Drive is one of the few long roads in Toronto that breaks with the grid pattern. It runs on a diagonal course which, along with changes in grade along its length, creates some unique lot shapes and views. O'Connor Drive is also unique in that large portions of the west side of the Avenue are made up of employment lands while the east side is comprised of land uses typically found on Avenues. The close proximity of the Don River and Taylor Creek Ravines at the south end creates a natural background which frames the street and adds to its unique character and impacts development opportunities.

The portion of O'Connor Drive from Victoria Park south to Northline Road is in the North York District. The portion from Northline Road to St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road is in the Toronto and East York District. O'Connor Drive presently has somewhat different streetscape treatments and built form character along its length, the result of development occurring over time across two different former municipalities.

The North York District portion of the Avenue is characterized by larger lots and building footprints. Along this portion there are stand alone commercial buildings and plazas with front yard parking, apartment buildings, townhouses, a community park and an elementary school. Heights are predominately 1 and 2 storeys, with some 4 storey apartment buildings, a five storey office building and one 11 storey apartment building. A portion of a low rise, stable neighbourhood fronts onto O'Connor Drive on the west side. In 2005 the City planted street trees on the boulevard.

The Toronto and East York portion, between Northline Road and St. Clair Avenue and Sandra Road is characterized by more fine grained, compact development along with some larger lots and building footprints. A main street commercial area with attached low rise buildings and narrow frontages at the street edge is located on the east side of O'Connor Drive between St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road and Gardens Crescent. Heights range from 2 to 4 storeys. A low rise, stable neighbourhood is adjacent to the main street commercial area along the length of this portion of O'Connor Drive. The boulevard is narrow in the Toronto and East York portion and there are no street trees.

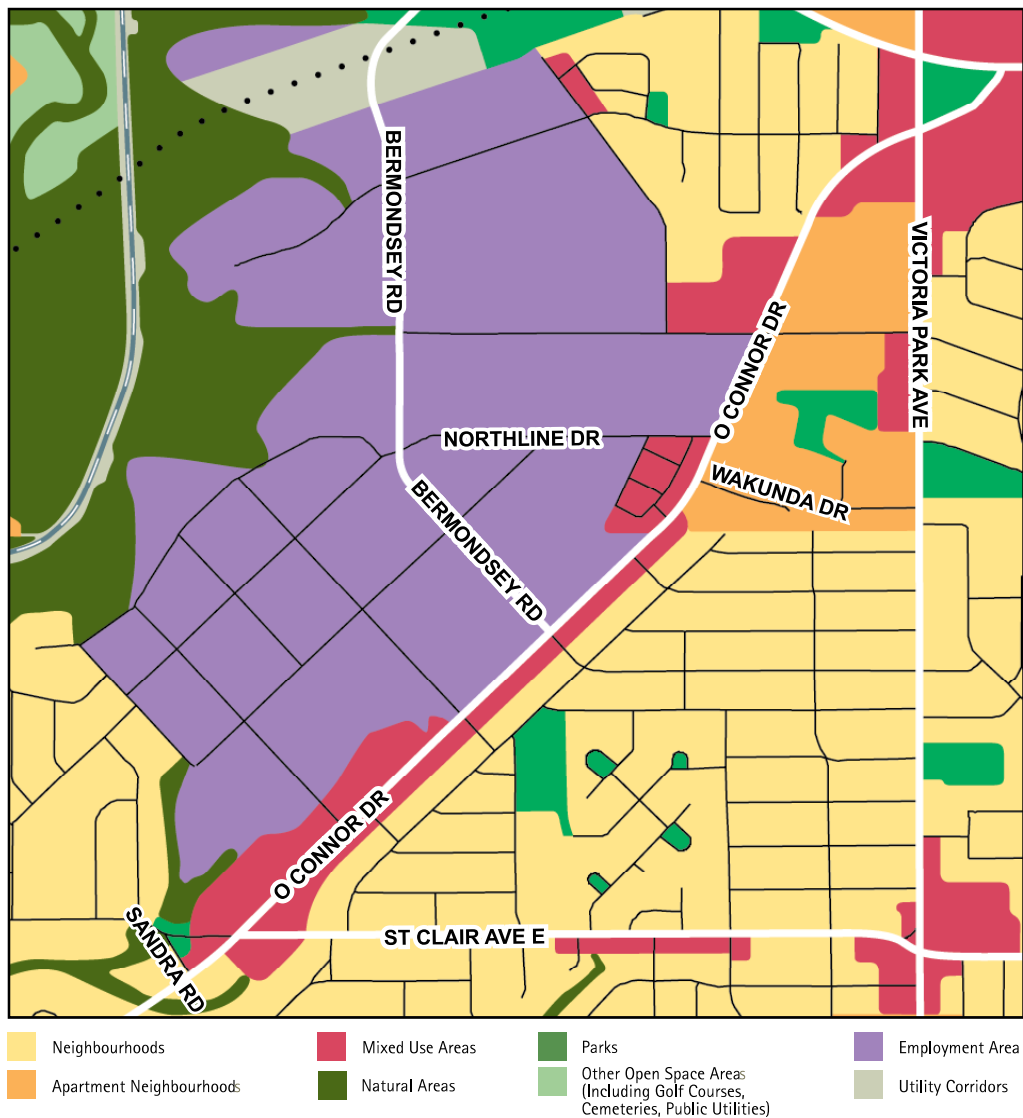


Figure 2: Official Plan: Land Use Plan Map 20

### 3.0 GOALS

The vision for O'Connor Drive is that it becomes a vibrant urban corridor that provides more opportunities for people to live, work and shop. To achieve this, the District Structure Plan and guidelines:

- provide a framework for the desired urban structure for the area;
- balance the function of O'Connor Drive as a through route for traffic to the downtown with its transformation into an active main street that is pedestrian friendly;
- provide that new development is to be sensitive to its existing and/or planned context;
- provide that new buildings are attractive, well proportioned and relate to the street;
- provide that new buildings create a comfortable and interesting environment for pedestrians; and
- encourage excellence in architecture, site planning and landscape design.

### 4.0 DISTRICT STRUCTURE PLAN

The District Structure Plan shows the framework for future development of the O'Connor Drive Avenue and is contained in Figure 3. The north and south ends of the Avenue are defined by two Key Intersections; Victoria Park/O'Connor Drive in the north and St. Clair Avenue and Sandra Road/O'Connor Drive at the south. An Emerging Main Streets Area is located on the northern portion of O'Connor Drive between the Key Intersection and Wakunda Drive. The southern portion of O'Connor Drive between Wakunda Drive and the St. Clair East and Sandra Road/O'Connor Drive Key Intersection is identified as a Main Streets Area.



Figure3: Schematic District Structure Plan

Moving from north to south, the District Structure Plan provides for the following development pattern:

**a) Key Intersection –**

**Victoria Park/O'Connor Drive**

- midrise, mixed use buildings which transition downward in density, heights and scale to the low rise and apartment neighbourhoods immediately to the south;  
and
- commercial uses at grade which are encouraged in order to provide interest and encourage pedestrian activity at the Key Intersection leading to a main streets area.

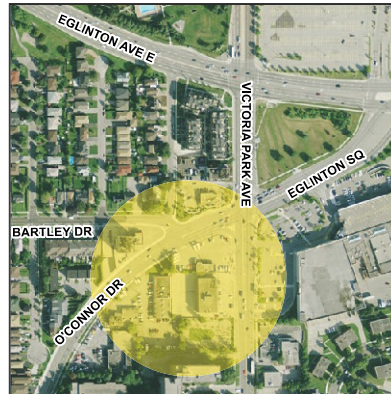


Figure 4:  
Key Intersection –  
Victoria Park/O'Connor Drive

**b) Emerging Main Streets Area –**  
**North O'Connor Drive**

- lower scale development in keeping with the Neighbourhoods and Apartment Neighbourhoods designations of these lands in the Official Plan;
- midrise development on the large site on the west side of O'Connor Drive at Sunrise Avenue;
- and
- mixed use development with a transition in height, density and scale to the low rise neighbourhood to the north.

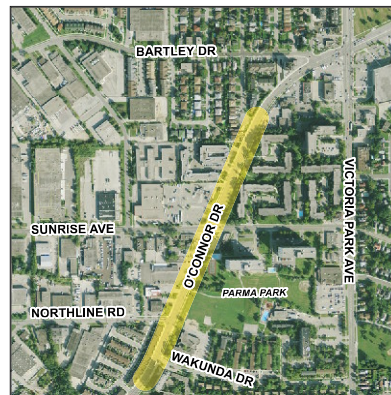


Figure 5:  
Emerging Main Streets Area –  
North O'Connor Drive



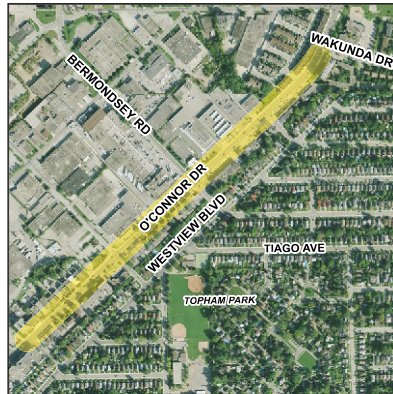


Figure 6:  
Main Streets Area –  
South O'Connor Drive

### c) Main Streets Area – South O'Connor Drive

- development on the east side to reflect the lower scale, fine grained character of existing development and respect the low rise, stable neighbourhood to the east; and
- development of lands on the west side of O'Connor Drive, which are designated Employment Areas in the Official Plan will be consistent with the Employment Areas development criteria contained in Section 4.6 of the Official Plan

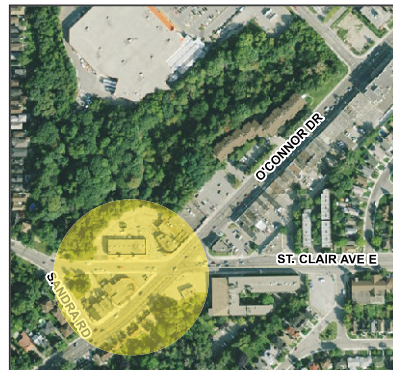
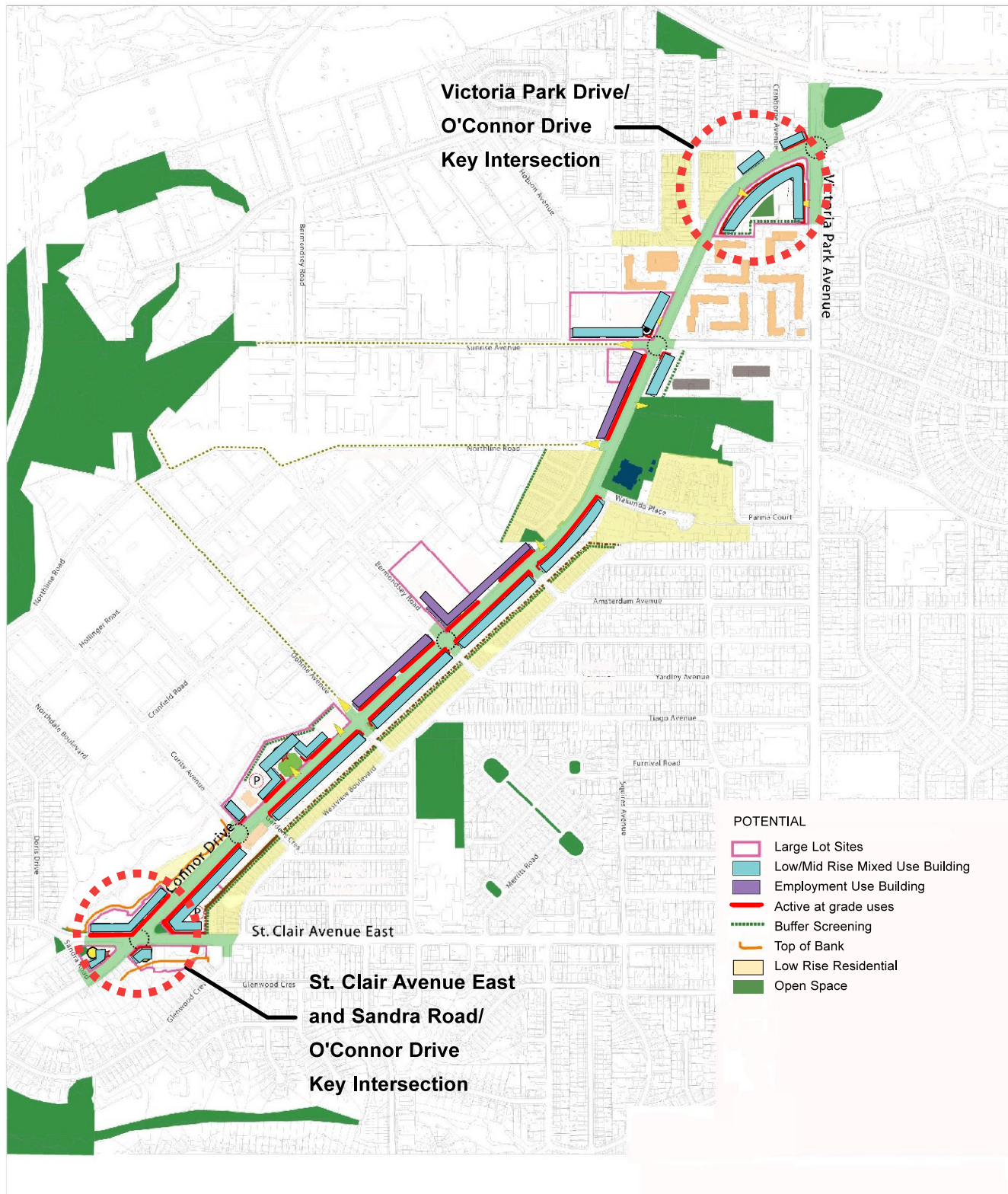


Figure 7:  
Key Intersection – St. Clair Avenue East  
and Sandra Road, and O'Connor Drive

### d) Key Intersection – St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road, O'Connor Drive

- lower scale, mixed use development with a focus on commercial uses at grade to provide interest and encourage pedestrian activity at the Key Intersection, and to respect the adjacent low rise, stable neighbourhood.

Figure 8: DISTRICT STRUCTURE PLAN





## 5.0 PUBLIC REALM AND BUILT FORM GUIDELINES

### 5.1 Key Intersection - Victoria Park/ O'Connor Drive

Lands at the O'Connor Drive and Victoria Park Avenue intersection provide the north entrance way to the O'Connor Drive Avenue and have been identified as a Key Intersection. The elevation of O'Connor Drive at this intersection provides a panoramic view of downtown Toronto. The Eglinton/Victoria Park bus transit hub is located immediately to the north of this Key Intersection. The Eglinton Light Rail Transit is proposed to extend from Black Creek in the west to the Kennedy subway station in the east with a stop at the bus transit hub. As well, plans are underway to improve the appearance and function of the transit hub through the creation of a "Gateway Park." Existing development in the Key Intersection is suburban in character and consists of large lots with stand alone, one and two storey commercial buildings and surface parking. The commercial uses consist of restaurants, retail strip plazas and an office building.

#### Built Form

New development will generally be mid-rise buildings positioned along O'Connor Drive to frame the street. Heights will peak at the Eglinton/O'Connor intersection and there will be a transition downward in height, density and scale to the low-rise apartments and single detached neighbourhood which are adjacent to the south and west. Base buildings will have a minimum height of 3 storeys, and where taller than 3-storeys and a minimum building setback at the third story of 3 metres from O'Connor Drive. Front yard setbacks for new development should be a minimum of 3 metres in order to achieve a double row of trees in the pedestrian realm. Rear yards will be a minimum of 15 metres in depth in order to accommodate a service lane, parking, a walkway, a landscape buffer and tree planting.

For development on the west side of the Key Intersection, a 45 degree angular plane from the Neighbourhoods property line will be applied to ensure new development provides an appropriate transition to the adjacent low rise neighbourhood.



Figure 9: View southwest from O'Connor Drive and Victoria Park Avenue East



Figure 10: Context Victoria Park Avenue and O'Connor Drive Key Intersection

In the event that properties on the east side of the Key Intersection (1474 to 1861 O'Connor Drive) are consolidated, or partially consolidated, the proponent will prepare a detailed urban design master plan which will show how development will address these Design Guidelines as well as:

- the location of a limited number of consolidated vehicular access points to the site;
- the organization and location of parking and consolidated service functions within the built form of the development;
- the location and conceptual design of mid block pedestrian connections across the site; and
- the organization and conceptual design of open space on site.

Applicants for individual properties, or partial consolidations, will provide a detailed three dimensional plan that will explain how their proposal would fit with potential future development on adjacent lands.

### Public Realm

Buildings will be brought to the street and a mix of uses will be encouraged, particularly grade related commercial uses for an active pedestrian environment. Curb cuts are to be minimized to lessen potential pedestrian and vehicle conflict and servicing is to be consolidated out of view from the street. In order to increase opportunities for tree planting, street furniture and wider sidewalks, new development will provide for a minimum 6.5 metres wide sidewalk zone, to allow for tree planting on the boulevard and within adjacent private front yards. This will allow for a double row of street trees and the creation of a promenade.

In conjunction with possible future redevelopment of the properties at 1880, 1888 and 1900 on the west side of O'Connor Drive, minor reworking of the Bartley Drive/Cranbourne Avenue intersection with streetscape improvements should be pursued to make this intersection more attractive and pedestrian friendly. This includes minor road realignment of the Bartley Drive/Cranbourne Avenue intersection, installing pedestrian crossing markings at this intersection on the west side of O'Connor Drive and landscape improvements.



Figure 11: Conceptual Plan for Key Intersection

Potential	
Midrise Building	
Ground Floor Commercial	
Open Space	
Public Realm Improvements	
Pedestrian Linkage	
Service Laneway	
Tree Planting	



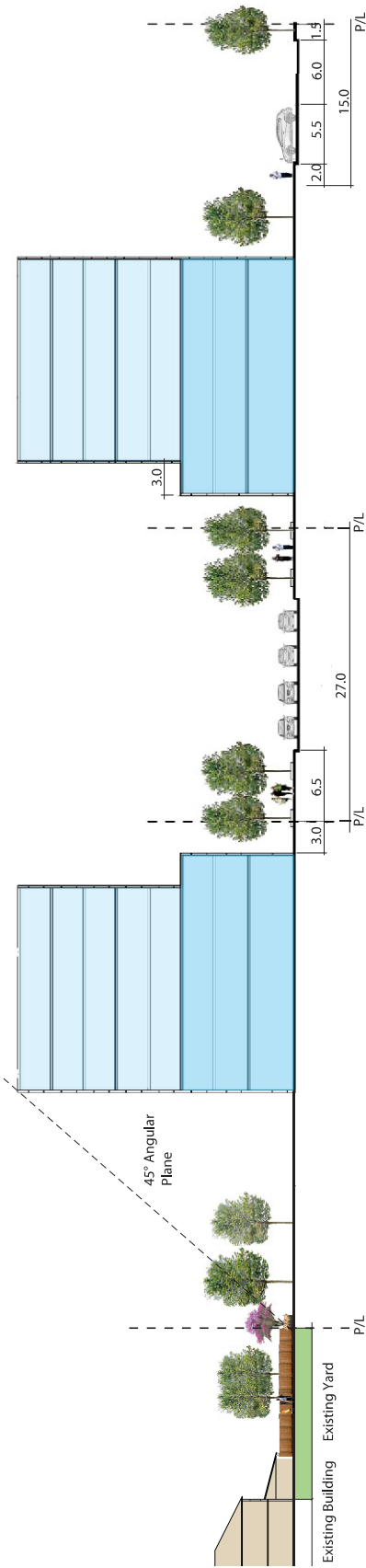


Figure 12: Victoria Park Avenue / O'Connor Drive  
Key Intersection Cross Section with Low Density Residential

## 5.2 Emerging Main Streets Area – O'Connor Drive North

The Emerging Main Streets Area is the portion of O'Connor Drive located between the Victoria Park Key Intersection in the north to Northline Road/Wakunda Drive in the south.

Only one portion of the "Emerging Main Streets Area" is designated as Mixed Use, which is the large site at 1776 O'Connor Drive and for which direction for future development is provided below. The remainder of this portion of the Avenue is made up of Neighbourhood, Apartment Neighbourhood and Employment lands. Compatible infill development may occur in the Neighbourhood and Apartment Neighbourhood lands and development on Employment lands is discussed below.

The property on the north-west corner of Sunrise Avenue and O'Connor Drive (1776 O'Connor Drive) is designated Mixed Use. Formerly the site of a Canadian Tire store, the property is currently occupied by a Self Storage facility, auto service station and a large, common surface parking lot. As part of preparation to redevelop this property, the proponent will prepare a detailed urban design master plan that will address these guidelines and show:

- the location of a limited number of consolidated vehicular access points to the site;
- the organization and location of parking and consolidated service functions within the built form of the development;
- how an appropriate downward transition in scale to the low rise neighbourhood to the north will be achieved by development on site; and
- how retail uses will be incorporated at grade in order to support the character of the Emerging Main Streets Area.



Figure 13: Emerging Main Streets Area



Figure 14: 1776 O'Connor Drive at Sunrise Avenue

Properties on the west side of O'Connor Drive between Sunrise Avenue and Northline Road are part of the O'Connor/Bermondsey Business Area and are designated Employment Areas. It is the intent of these Guidelines that the employment lands that front onto O'Connor Drive will contribute to an attractive pedestrian environment on the Avenue through the following:

- new buildings will be located at the street edge behind publicly accessible open space;
- parking will be located at the back of the site out of view from the public street;
- permitted commercial uses will be encouraged at grade adjacent to the street; and
- vehicular access from O'Connor Drive will be limited. Driveways will be consolidated.

## Public Realm – General

Improving the quality of the public realm on O'Connor is an ongoing priority.

## Open Space – Parma Park

Parma Park is located south of Sunrise Avenue on the east side of O'Connor Drive and is an important amenity for residents and businesses in the area. It contains the O'Connor Community Centre and sports playing fields.

At present, Parma Park is fenced off from O'Connor Drive and the only connection to the street is through a 2 metre wide opening leading to a pedestrian walkway which extends east-west across the park. A wider, more inviting public access should be created at O'Connor Drive by removing fencing at the entrance edge and installing lighting, landscaping improvements, seating and signage to identify Parma Park and the interior location of the O'Connor Community Centre.

In terms of recreation improvements, a new water play facility was built for the O'Connor Community Centre in 2010. The Capital Budget provides for the expansion of the community centre in 2014 - 2015. The existing baseball field at the north east corner of the park is underutilized and could be re-purposed as a community garden, a playground or basketball court. This improvement project would require a consultation process with the community, Parks & Recreation staff and the ward Councillor.

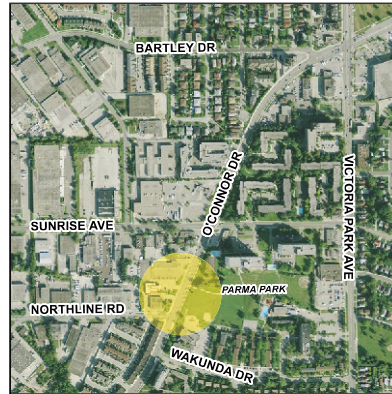


Figure 15: Location map of Parma Park



Figure 16: View of entrance to Parma Park from O'Connor Drive



Figure 17: O'Connor Community Centre

The Toronto District School Board owns the east-west walkway and it is maintained by the City of Toronto. In addition to the tree planting along the walkway completed in 2010 further landscaping improvements are needed in the north east corner of the park where existing plantings need to be replaced. Plantings should include species that are easy to maintain, organized to accentuate the entrance way to the O'Connor Community Centre and to allow for unobstructed sight lines.



Figure 18: Tree Planting Opportunities



### 5.3 Main Streets Area – O'Connor Drive South

The Main Streets Area – O'Connor Drive South is located between Northline Road and Wakunda Drive in the north and the St. Clair/O'Connor Drive Key Intersection in the south. The east side of O'Connor Drive between Gardens Crescent and St. Clair Avenue contains the only predominant main street commercial built form on the Avenue. The buildings are low rise (2 to 4 storeys) with narrow frontages at the street edge. The commercial lots are shallow in depth and back directly onto the low rise residential neighbourhood. There are also low-rise apartments, employment lands, a community park and ravine lands on this portion of the Avenue.

#### Built Form

The lands on the east side of O'Connor Drive containing the main street commercial uses are designated Mixed Use Areas, as shown on Figure ~, and the Official Plan provides that new development is to be compatible with and respect the context of the existing low rise neighbourhood to the east. New developments is to provide a transition to existing development.

New development on lands designated Mixed Use Areas fronting onto the east side of O'Connor Drive will be modest in scale in order to respect the low rise neighbourhood immediately to the east. All development should be setback a minimum of 7.5 metres from adjacent low rise residential properties and a 45 degree angular plane will be applied from the adjacent residential property line. This will ensure an appropriate transition in scale, and all development, including mechanical penthouses, will fall below it. In combination with the angular plane, the height of development will be limited by the lots' comparatively shallow depth.

Mechanical penthouses, can be very visually prominent on low mid-rise buildings, and should be well integrated with a building's overall design. On O'Connor Drive they may be surrounded or wrapped with habitable space, so long as it falls below the angular plane. This will improve the appearance of the building and provide an opportunity for added density without additional impact.

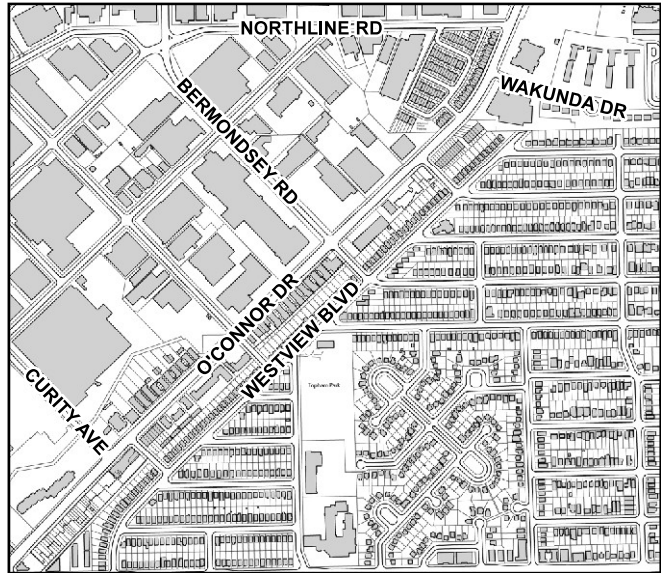


Figure 19: O'Connor Drive South between Northline Road and St. Clair Avenue East



Figure 20: Main Streets Area, O'Connor Drive south



Figure 21: Conceptual Structure Plan

Along the O'Connor Drive frontage, new development will be brought to the property line and will create a "street wall". This cumulative frontage will include active at grade uses. Over time, such development will fill the gaps in the streetscape.

Adjacent to O'Connor Drive and side streets, buildings will incorporate a 1.5m upper level stepback at a height of 11m, approximately the height of the existing built form along the street edge. This will place a convincing emphasis on the base of new buildings and allow taller development to visually integrate with the built form context.

Properties on the west side of O'Connor Drive, to the north and south of Bermondsey Road, are part of the O'Connor/Bermondsey Business Area and are designated Employment Areas in the Official Plan. It is the intent of these Guidelines that the Employment Areas that front onto O'Connor Drive will also contribute to an attractive pedestrian environment.

New buildings on the west side of O'Connor Drive will be massed in a manner complementary to the prevailing character and scale of the street and neighbourhood. Adjacent to the public sidewalk they will address the street in two ways. They will generally be built to the property line and incorporate a 1.5m stepback above 11m as do the buildings on the east side of the street. However, in consideration of the shortage of parkland in the area, where possible, development will be encouraged to incorporate publicly accessible open space along O'Connor Drive. All parking and servicing will be located at the rear of properties with views limited from O'Connor Drive. Uses permitted by the Official Plan and Zoning By-law, will be encouraged to limit vehicular access from O'Connor Drive and to consolidate driveways.

## Public Realm

The Main Streets Area has a variable 6 metre wide boulevard that includes areas of on-street parking, but no street trees or grassed portion. As outlined above, buildings should be brought to the property line. The pedestrian sidewalk will be a minimum of 3.5 metres wide with a minimum pedestrian clearway of 2.1 metres. It will include tree planting wherever feasible, however, if on-street parking currently exists, it will remain to support retail uses at grade.

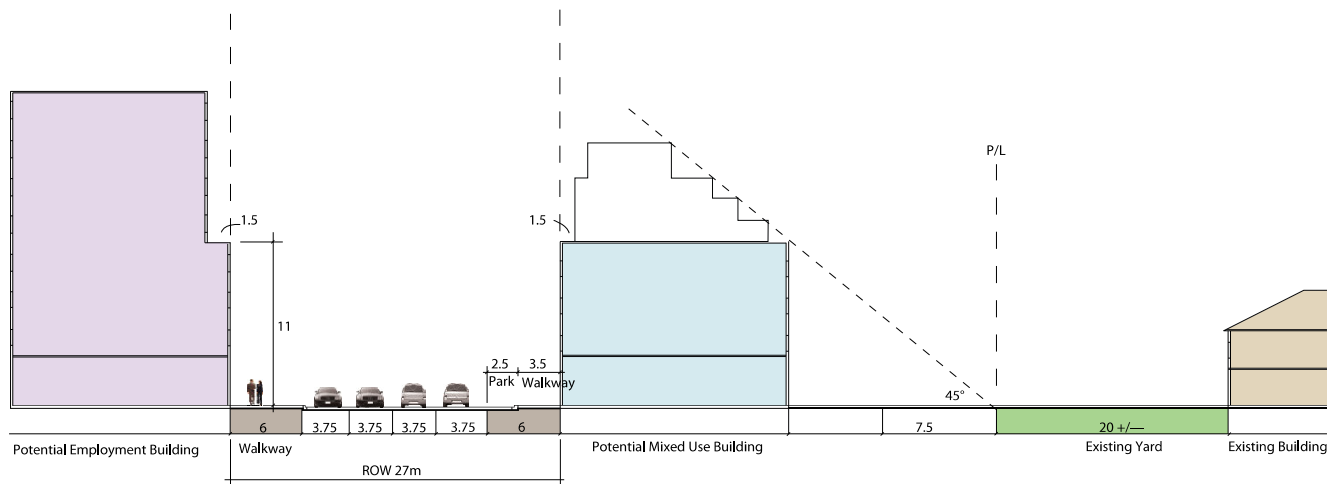


Figure 22: Cross section for Main Street Area -  
O'Connor Drive South





Figure 23: Topham Park

#### Public Realm– Topham Park

Topham Park is located on the east side of O'Connor Drive at Tiago Avenue and Dohme Avenue. It contains a playground, sports playing fields and a community building with a multi-purpose room.

Potential improvements for Topham Park include placing signage on O'Connor Drive to identify the park location and additional tree planting along Dohme Avenue leading to the park. Within Topham Park, the suggested upgrades include improvements to the driveway, in consultation with the School Board painting a mural on the school's building and removing the oversized planter boxes. There may be opportunities for improvements over the long term to the Topham Park clubhouse.



Figure 24: Taylor Creek Ravine

#### Taylor Creek Ravine

A tributary to the Taylor Creek Ravine runs parallel to O'Connor Drive from Curity Avenue to Taylor Creek Park, below the O'Conner Viaduct. The existing connection to the Taylor Creek Ravine, located at the O'Connor Viaduct near Glenwood Crescent should be enhanced through better signage at the trail connection. Placing directional and information signs at the south-west corner of Curity Avenue and O'Connor Drive, where the tributary meets O'Connor Drive, is recommended in order to direct residents to the connecting trail within Taylor Creek Park and provide environmental information.



Figure 25: Taylor Creek Park

#### 5.4 Key Intersection – St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road/O'Connor Drive

The Key Intersection of St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road, and O'Connor Drive consists of low rise commercial and residential buildings and functions as an entrance to the O'Connor Drive Avenue. Almost all of the properties in the Key Intersection are designated Mixed Use in the Official Plan. Development here will require an appropriate transition to the adjacent low-rise residential uses.

##### Built Form

New development will be brought forward to the street and contribute to the creation of a continuous "street wall" with active at grade uses. Over time such development will fill the gaps in the streetwall. For development on mixed use sites, a 45 degree angular plane will be applied from the adjacent low rise residential lot lines to ensure an appropriate transition in scale.

The development potential of some lots in this area will be significantly impacted by their proximity to the Taylor Creek Ravine and its regulatory "top of bank". Setback requirements from "top of bank" are established by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

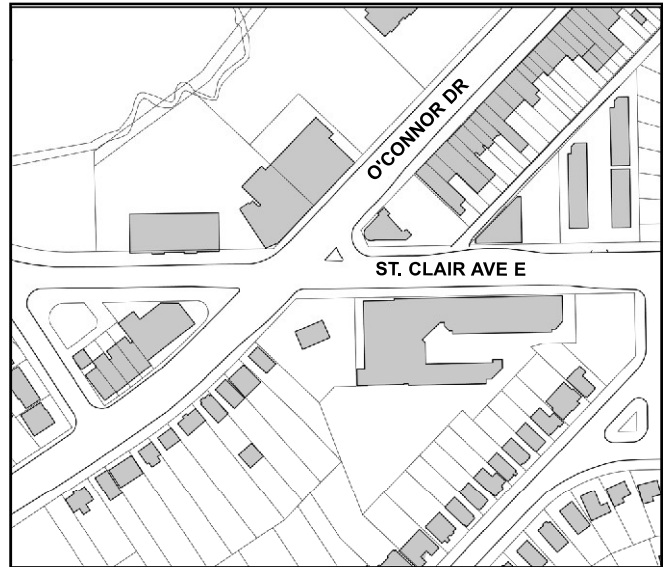


Figure 26: O'Connor Drive and St. Clair Avenue East Intersection



Figure 27: O'Connor Drive/St Clair Avenue East

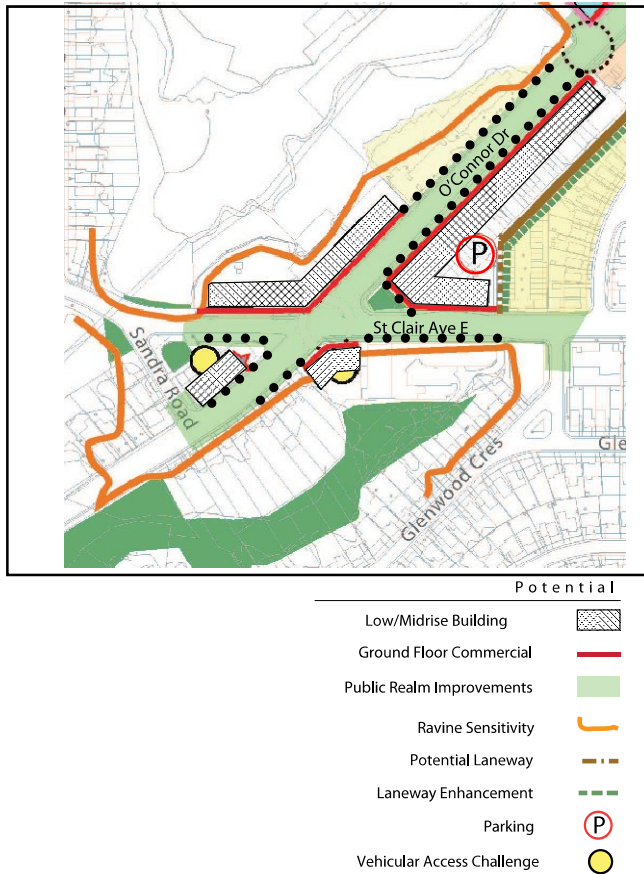


Figure 28: Conceptual Plan for Key Intersection:  
St. Clair Avenue East and Sandra Road / O'Connor Drive

### Public Realm

The irregular alignment of St. Clair Avenue East and O'Connor Drive creates unusual site conditions. The present road configuration gives priority to automobiles over pedestrians. Developers of properties here will take particular care to avoid creating conflicts between pedestrian movements and vehicular access.

In order to create better quality, more defined sidewalk zones, the reduction of curb cuts on the north side of St. Clair Avenue East should be explored in conjunction with future redevelopment. Existing parking spaces currently located in lay-bys on the east side of O'Connor Drive support the adjacent commercial uses and are to be retained.

Trees should be planted in continuous tree pits or raised planter beds wherever possible. Tree planting in the boulevard adjacent to the apartment complex on the west side of O'Connor Drive would be continued in open planting beds.



## 6.0 STREETScape IMPROVEMENT

To date, some streetscape improvements have been implemented on O'Connor Drive including new transit shelters, benches and waste receptacles at the Victoria Park, Sunrise Avenue, Bermondsey Road and Dohme Avenue intersections. To supplement tree planting along O'Connor Drive which occurred in 2005, new locations were planted in 2010 which include; in front of the walk up rental apartment buildings between Bermondsey Road and Curity Avenue and along the length of the Parma Park internal walkway. Additional streetscape improvements along O'Connor Drive will be secured as part of any development proposal within the Study area.



Figure 29: Existing view of O'Connor Drive looking north between Dohme Avenue and Bermondsey Road

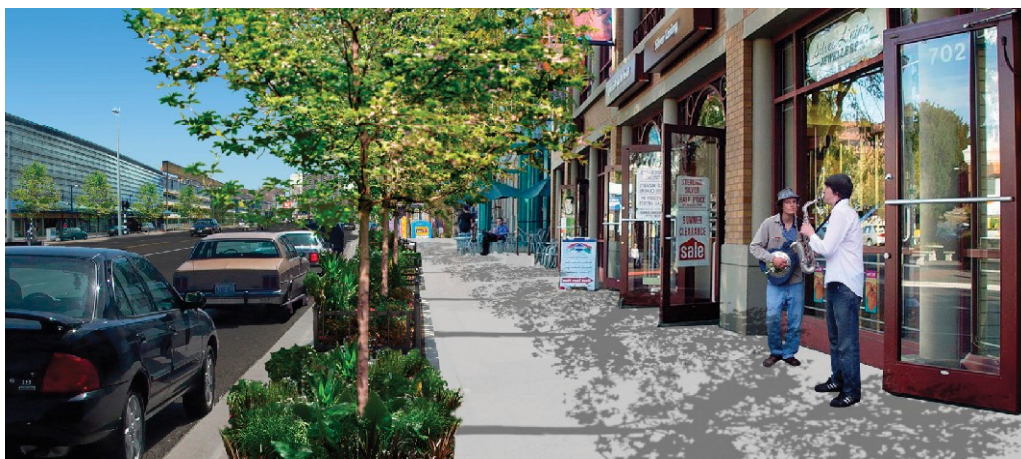


Figure 30: Rendering of street related mixed-use development and redevelopment of employment lands with office buildings

## **7.0 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA**

There is potential for redevelopment and stakeholder interest in seeing the O'Connor Drive Avenue evolve. The creation of a Business Improvement Area (BIA) for O'Connor Drive would provide a body to coordinate marketing, signage, streetscape improvements, event planning and information resources. This in turn, would strengthen O'Connor Drive's identity as a unique Avenue, increasing the rate of investment in the area and attracting residents who would sustain the retail businesses. Investment would encourage further redevelopment, continuing improvement to O'Connor's image and streetscape. A BIA for O'Connor Drive could play a role in assisting the area to reach its full potential as a revitalized urban corridor. Additional information regarding establishing a BIA can be found at [www.toronto.ca/ecdev/bia](http://www.toronto.ca/ecdev/bia)