

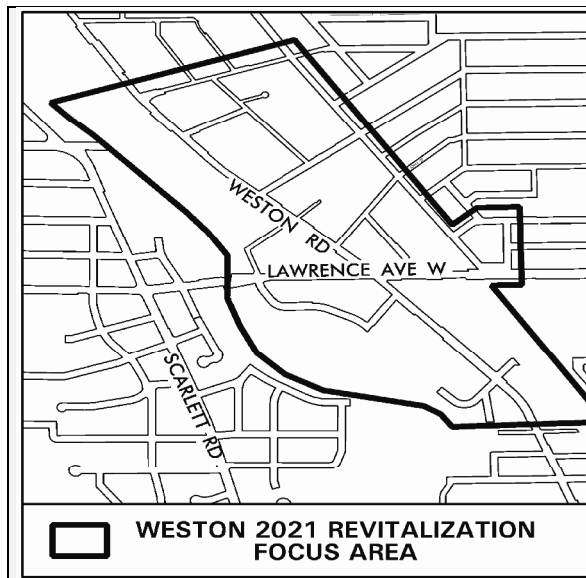
Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy - Request for Direction Report

Date:	February 1, 2012
To:	Etobicoke York Community Council
From:	Director, Community Planning, Etobicoke York District Director, Community Resources, Social Development, Finance & Administration
Wards:	Ward 11, York South Weston
Reference Number:	12 108402 WET 11 TM

SUMMARY

The Weston community has become a focus of interest for examining opportunities to attract private investment and redevelopment due to Metrolinx's mandate to increase regional GO Train service, redevelop the existing GO Transit station in the area, and implement infrastructure for the Union Pearson Air Rail Link (ARL). These infrastructure investments present a unique opportunity for revitalization of the community.

In an effort to revitalize the neighbourhood, City staff have identified the need to coordinate all of the City initiatives in the area. The Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy is a long-term neighbourhood approach aimed at guiding reinvestment, redevelopment and capital improvements. This approach will build on existing community services and infrastructure development actions of City divisions and community partners. This strategy focuses on the area bounded by Humber River to the west, Church Street to the north, Victoria Avenue to the south and Rosemount Avenue / Sam Frustaglio Drive to the east, in the Weston neighbourhood.



This report provides a summary and update on City and agency initiatives in the Weston community. Further, it recommends that Council endorse the revitalization approach and the establishment of an inter-divisional implementation team to coordinate the revitalization initiatives in the community of Weston.

This report has been written in consultation with the City Manager's Office and those City divisions that will be participating in the Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy.

Financial Impact

Partnership funding has been secured to support the development of two Signature Initiatives, the Cultural/Creative Hub and Recipe for Community. Social Development, Finance and Administration Division is preparing a companion report for consideration by the Executive Committee on February 13, 2012, in order to seek authority to receive \$1.1 million from Metrolinx towards the Cultural/Creative Hub and up to \$500,000 from Toronto Community Foundation toward the Recipe for Community initiatives.

The adoption of this report does not result in any other financial implications. Should key aspects of project or program initiatives required to support the Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy not be funded within existing divisional budgets or through external partnerships, individual City divisions will provide separate reports to Council at a later date on resourcing initiatives and their financial implications.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division and Social Development, Finance & Administration Division recommends that:

1. City Council endorse the revitalization approach identified and outlined in this report.
2. Further community consultation be undertaken in order to present and prioritize initiatives, next steps and engage residents, wherever possible in the implementation.
3. Social Development Finance and Administration (SDFA) be the division lead to oversee and coordinate an inter-divisional *Project Management Team (PMT)* to coordinate City programs and project/initiatives that will contribute to the revitalization of the Weston community.

DECISION HISTORY

In July 2010, City Council directed the Project Director, Tower Renewal Office to work with the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, the Executive Director,

Social Development, Finance and Administration, the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture and other divisions as required to assess the opportunities in the Weston and Mount Dennis area to apply tower renewal concepts. For further reference, this motion can be found at the following city web site link:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2010.EX45.52>

City Council's direction resulted in a series of City-led exercises focusing on Weston that were conducted by relevant divisions to explore opportunities for neighbourhood development. These exercises have contributed to the establishment of a comprehensive approach to revitalization. Further details of these exercises are discussed in this report.

BACKGROUND

The community of Weston is recognized as a Priority Neighbourhood for coordinated city service investment. This community has experienced almost no new private development during Toronto's largest residential development boom.

As a result of Metrolinx's mandate to increase rapid transit service and redevelop the existing GO Transit station in Weston, the community has become a focus of interest for examining opportunities to attract private investment and redevelopment. The GO/Metrolinx Georgetown South Project (GTS) will utilize the existing rail corridor that passes through Weston and includes upgrading infrastructure and the new Union Pearson Air Rail Link (ARL). The following infrastructure improvements are planned to be completed in the Weston community by 2015:

- a) the existing GO station and platform located between John Street and Lawrence Avenue West will be relocated to the south-east corner of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West with a new Air Rail Link platform;
- b) a portion of the rail corridor will be lowered from Lawrence Avenue West to Church Street with a covered tunnel constructed between King Street and Church Street; and
- c) John Street will also be permanently closed to vehicular traffic which will result in the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the rail corridor.

Infrastructure improvements will result in community impacts that will include the possible relocation or redevelopment of the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) lot on John Street, reduced access to the farmer's market from the residential neighbourhood to the east and altered access throughout the community during various stages of construction. Despite these impacts, this project presents a possible catalyst to attracting future development. See Attachment 1 for a full description of the project details and the City's involvement.

Weston 2021 Focus Area

As noted, City Council gave direction to apply Tower Renewal concepts in the communities of Weston and Mount Dennis, which would work to assist in revitalizing

these communities. The Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy is focused on the area bounded by Humber River to the west, Church Street to the north, Victoria Avenue to the south and Rosemount Avenue / Sam Frustaglio Drive to the east in the Weston Community. Revitalization of this community will be conducted in two stages.

Weston was selected as the first phase of this revitalization initiative given the high number of apartment buildings and the ability to apply Tower Renewal concepts; the location and scope of the infrastructure investments related to the Metrolinx Air Rail Line and the strength of social infrastructure (BIAs, resident associations, etc.).

Although this is a Weston Revitalization Strategy, both Mount Dennis and Weston will benefit from the revitalization strategy outlined in this report. It is anticipated that the Mount Dennis area will receive new transportation infrastructure in conjunction with the future convergence of the Eglinton-Scarborough Cross-town Light Rapid Transit initiative associated with the Georgetown South Project (GTS). A Mobility Hub is planned for the area where the GO Transit line will connect with the LRT line and Metrolinx is in the early stages of conducting a mobility hub study.

City and Related Agency Initiatives

As a result of the GO/Metrolinx project and the motion adopted by City Council a number of city and other agency initiatives have been undertaken to examine opportunities for the revitalization of the Weston community. These include:

- a) Top 10 Ideas for Weston (P. Bedford, University of Toronto) 2010
- b) Tower Renewal – Weston Apartment Building Assessment Winter 2011
- c) Artscape Feasibility Study - Cultural/Creative Hub in Weston Mount Dennis March 2011
- d) Interdivisional Staff Visioning Workshop April 2011
- e) Weston 2021 Design Charrette May 3 -5, 2011
- f) Urban Land Institute (ULI) - Technical Assistance Panel May 31- June 1, 2011
(ULI is a non-profit research and education organization focusing on land use and real estate development.)

A summary of these initiatives and their outcomes is provided in Attachment 1.

COMMENTS

Findings of Key Initiatives

Among the City and agency initiatives recently undertaken or still underway in Weston, four key initiatives, have provided a number of useful findings to guide revitalization, redevelopment and capital improvements in the area. As well, they provide perspectives on how revitalization in Weston could be achieved. These initiatives include the Artscape Feasibility Study for a Cultural/Creative Hub in Weston Mount Dennis, the Interdivisional Staff Visioning Workshop, the Weston 2021 Design Charrette and the Urban Land Institute - Technical Assistance Panel (ULI / TAP Panel).

The Artscape Study tested the feasibility of creating a Cultural/Creative Hub model in Weston. The Visioning Workshop identified possible areas for revitalization where current and future divisional activities and programs could be utilized to implement changes, based on staff's understanding of the area's context and constraints. The Design Charrette explored long-term design and development scenarios within Weston that could improve circulation and promote livability and local attributes. The ULI/TAP Panel tested the economic feasibility of these designs and development scenarios and provided recommendations on how to bring these ideas to fruition.

The following is a summary of the key findings and perspectives from these initiatives:

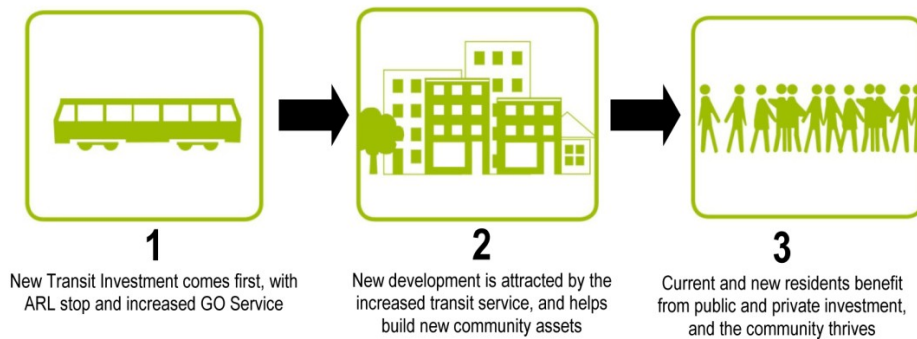
- a) The GO/Metrolinx Georgetown South Project (GTS) will not be enough to stimulate developer investment in Weston. Instead, the City, area residents and other stakeholders must continue to make investments in Weston to encourage incremental change through quick start initiatives that market and improve local amenities so as to attract more people to the area.
- b) There is a need to overcome negative perceptions and safety concerns about Weston that are obstacles to revitalization and private development.
- c) Development in Weston could happen but only in tandem with multi-tiered revitalization plans and political will/resources with support from local residents and key stakeholders.
- d) Longer-term revitalization is going to require a number of catalysts and a concerted approach to enabling these to move forward (i.e. key development projects such as the Metrolinx station redevelopment and Cultural/Creative Hub).
- e) A City initiated inter-divisional approach to revitalization is required to coordinate initiatives and create a context that supports and encourages reinvestment and private development and partnerships. This approach should include a division lead to ensure commitment to the revitalization strategy, to eliminate duplication, combine resources and provide focused change.
- f) The approach to revitalization needs to address the social, environmental physical and economic needs and priorities of the community so as to support a liveable and healthy community.

- g) Existing City activities need to be coordinated in a manner that enhances the revitalization efforts. City divisions are currently undertaking activities in Weston which include but are not limited to: capital park projects, development review, tree planting, BIA initiatives and employment strategies, safety development and employment strategies.
- h) A Cultural/Creative Hub is feasible and can be used to support and catalyze social, cultural and economic revitalization in the neighbourhood.

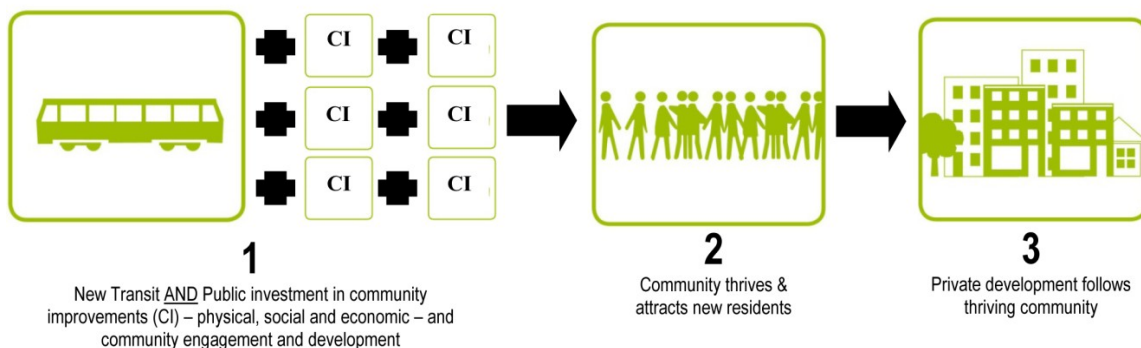
These findings arose due to a shift in perspective on how revitalization for this area should be approached. The following figure, illustrates the different Design Charrette and ULI/TAP Panel perspectives on revitalization.

The Design Charrette assumed that improved GO service and a new Air Rail Link (ARL) stop could increase the potential for attracting private development that could be used to fund community improvements. Whereas, the ULI/TAP Panel concluded that GO transit improvements, while a critical catalyst, would not be sufficient to attract private development to the area. Instead transit improvements would have to coincide with incremental public investment in community improvements, in order to overcome negative perceptions that were viewed as obstacles to revitalization and attracting private investment. The panel noted this would be the appropriate combined approach to revitalizing the community.

Charrette Perspective on Revitalization



TAP Perspective on Revitalization



Revitalization Themes

In reviewing the findings from the initiatives discussed above a number of recurring themes emerged. These themes provide a framework to identify areas for improvement and focus responsive action to enhance Weston's image, local assets, safety and community cohesion in order to improve Weston's attractiveness for private development and reinvestment. The revitalization initiatives can be generally grouped into the following areas:

1. Community Safety

Improving community safety and the perception of safety both in the physical environment and on a personal basis will assist in enhancing the livability of the area making Weston a desirable place to live and do business.

2. Branding and Destination

Developing a greater community identity by marketing the area as a destination and developing and promoting area assets and business incubators. This will assist in attracting people to Weston and provide a more stable environment for private investment.

3. Public Realm and Connectivity Improvements

Improving physical spaces like parks, streets and pathways and providing better access to these areas will make the area more animated, inviting and attractive. This will draw more people to area amenities and assist in dispelling safety concerns. These improvements will indicate to investors and the community that a larger revitalization process is under way.

4. Social Development and Community Cohesion

Improved community coordination and capacity building for residents and local service providers through the ongoing work of the Neighbourhood Action initiative which brings together City divisions, residents and community agencies to enhance access to education, training, employment opportunities and social services.

Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy

The Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy builds on and incorporates the outcomes of the City and agency led exercises that examined Weston to determine opportunities for reinvestment, growth and future development.

The Strategy provides a framework for focusing City and agency actions to advance the revitalization of the Weston community that support opportunities for private investment, development and area improvements. The long-term objective of the strategy is to enhance liveability Weston by supporting a healthy, economically diverse and fully integrated community.

The Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy aims to focus divisional efforts in a three-pronged approach, including (1) Quick Starts, (2) Core Projects, and (3) Signature

Initiatives. These initiatives will be undertaken by City divisions and community partners.

1. Quick Starts

Quick Starts include projects that are planned or underway that can be implemented within six months to one year. With community partners, and funders such as United Way Toronto and Atkinson Foundation leveraging existing community investments, Quick Starts will support meaningful resident engagement, especially among residents who face multiple barriers to community participation. Such projects will build resident capacity and support resident-led initiatives. Other initiatives will work to primarily enhance local physical infrastructure to improve Weston's image and community perception. A few current projects include a cycling and pedestrian connection to Humber Valley Trail, wayfinding and improved signage to Humber Valley, and tree planting initiatives.

To date, some of the anticipated Quick Start projects that have been identified are indicated in the chart below:

Quick Start Initiatives		
Revitalization Theme	Activities	Divisional Involvement
Community Safety	1. Implementing Community Safety Protocol	Social Development Finance & Administration
Branding and Destination	2. Street Art Program/Support on graffiti vandalism	Transportation Services - Public Realm Section
Public Realm and Connectivity Improvements	3. New street furniture and signage for Weston Road and John Street	Transportation Services - Public Realm Section City Planning
	4. Study of sidewalk widening along Weston road	Transportation Planning/Infrastructure Planning
Improved Social and Community Cohesion	5. Continued Neighbourhood Action under the Strong Neighbourhood Strategy	Social Development Finance & Administration
	6. Ongoing community engagement and update sessions as needed	City Planning

2. Core Projects

The Strategy will also build on the existing initiatives of City divisions and partners to increase local services and opportunities that directly benefit residents. Core Projects will create a strong foundation of service supports and opportunities for the Weston community. These projects will support improved education, training and employment opportunities, enhance community safety, and develop community spaces and public realm projects. These projects will take more than a year to develop and deliver.

An important Core Project is Social Development Finance and Administration and Tower Renewal's work on Apartment Building Assessment in the Weston community, focusing on improving the current sense of safety and security. City staff are working with area property owners and managers to conduct site assessments, with a focus on safety and security on the apartment building sites. This also provides an opportunity to assess other aspects of the existing apartment buildings and provide guidance about potential improvements. As the area has a high concentration of rental apartment buildings, 32 in total, the physical condition, operation and amenities of these buildings play a significant role in establishing the area's character. Some issues may best be addressed through multiple property owners working together. City staff will work with the local councillor to coordinate these improvements.

This work is closely linked to United Way Toronto's neighbourhood strategy to change the conditions of Vertical Poverty in older high-rise apartment neighbourhoods. United Way Toronto has designated Weston as a demonstration site for high-rise tower investments aimed at significantly improving the quality of life for area residents.

The Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy also supports Core Projects arising through the City's Neighbourhood Action Partnership (NAP). In fall 2011, the NAP developed a strategic plan including a focus on community safety. This will result in the development of a Community Safety Protocol and community building efforts led by local community-based organizations in partnership with City staff.

Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) have started strategic discussions with Metrolinx to explore opportunities to create local hiring and skill building strategies as part of the Georgetown South project. One of the key elements in these discussions is the use of the Metrolinx's Weston Community Office as a focal point to connect residents and employers.

The Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy creates opportunities to leverage ongoing divisional activities to deliver greater local impact. To date, some of the anticipated Core Projects that have been identified are indicated in the chart below:

Core Projects		
Revitalization Theme	Activities	Divisional Involvement
Community Safety	1. Wayfinding, trails improvements	Social Development Finance & Administration Transportation Services - Public Realm Section Parks, Forestry & Recreation
Branding and Destination	2. Tower Renewal (safety audits)	City Manager's Office, Tower Renewal Section Toronto Employment and Social Services
Public Realm and Connectivity Improvements	3. Continue involvement in Metrolinx project	City Planning Transportation Services
Improved Social and Community Cohesion	4. Development Review	City Planning Transportation Services
	5. Local Employment/ Workforce Activities	Toronto Employment and Social Services

3. Signature Initiatives

Signature Initiatives will have the potential of creating significant neighbourhood impact for area residents. Initiatives such as a Cultural/Creative Hub, the Recipe for Community and the GO/Metrolinx Georgetown South Projects (including the John Street overpass, Weston Go Station Master plan and tunnel cover) will take time to develop, coordinate and deliver, but will result in iconic developments in the community.

The Cultural/Creative Hub will be used to support and stimulate social, cultural and economic revitalization. The John Street TPA parking lot is being considered as the potential development for the Cultural/Creative Hub project that will include a residential component. The TPA along with the City's Affordable Housing Office, are jointly working on a Request for Proposals (RFP) to seek a development partner. Funds in the amount of \$1.1 million dollars received from Metrolinx will be used toward the establishment of the Cultural/Creative Hub. A companion report dealing with this matter will be brought before the Executive Committee in February 2012.

Recipe for Community is another critical Signature Initiative under development for area residents. A program of the Toronto Community Foundation and investment partners, Recipe for Community works with residents to blend four key "ingredients": neighbourhood greening and beautification, community gathering, food and nutrition and youth engagement, to enhance community vitality. Each year, the Recipe for Community model is implemented in a different Toronto neighborhood in an effort to help residents take action towards improving their neighbourhood. In 2012, Recipe for Community will be brought to the Weston-Mount Dennis Priority Neighborhood as part of the coordinated strategy to make social development investments that can contribute to Weston's Revitalization.

Another Signature Initiative currently under development is the GO/Metrolinx project. Since John Street will be permanently closed to traffic as part of the Metrolinx Air Rail Link project, a pedestrian bridge will be built to compensate for the loss of access. Just off John Street is the site of the lively local Farmers Market requiring critical access as well. The new pedestrian bridge has spurred local imagination to create a pedestrian promenade for community activities and easy access over the rail line, including the Farmers Market. Through City Planning the Urban Land Institute (ULI) has provided a \$23,750 grant which will be used to revitalize the street through various streetscape improvements. See attachment 1 for more information on the ULI grant.

The anticipated Signature Initiatives that have been identified to date are indicated in the chart below:

Signature Initiatives		
Revitalization Theme	Activities	Divisional Involvement
Community Safety	1. Recipe for Community	Social Development Finance & Administration Toronto Office of Partnerships
Improved Social and Community Cohesion		
Branding and Destination	2. Cultural/Creative Hub Phase 1: Joint venture call for mixed- used Cultural/Creative Hub and residential housing on John Street site.	Economic Development & Culture Toronto Parking Authority Affordable Housing Office
Public Realm and Connectivity Improvements	3. Metrolinx project: GO station relocation Master Plan, tunnel cover design and bridge overpass	City Planning Transportation Services City Planning Transportation Services - Public Realm Section Urban Land Institute
	4. John St. improvements	

Other general revitalization activities such as development review, park and pedestrian connections, heritage planning, tree planting, BIA initiatives, business retention and expansion activities, a public realm and art plan and an integrated employment plan may not provide enough impact on their own. However over the long-term these activities will provide for incremental and coordinated change, which will have a cumulative benefit for the community.

As Quick Starts, Core Projects and Signature Initiatives are implemented, other opportunities may arise to create partnerships that can have immediate service impact for

residents and strengthen the area's potential for private sector redevelopment. In addition, consideration will also be given to leveraging public realm opportunities that may arise as a result of scheduled transportation capital improvements.

Weston Project Management Team

In order to effectively and efficiently facilitate the revitalization of Weston, divisional activities need to be coordinated to eliminate duplication, combine resources and provide focused change. The Weston 2021 Project Management Team (PMT) will provide a framework for implementing a comprehensive revitalization strategy in Weston.

The City's Social Development, Finance and Administration division will coordinate the PMT to focus City staff and partners in the appropriate work groups that will integrate and implement the Weston 2021 Revitalization initiatives. The PMT members will ensure all work is coordinated and supporting the overall objectives of revitalization.

The PMT approach is a successful model currently used by City staff across the corporation to coordinate divisional efforts in other communities working within a revitalization framework. Established as part of the Revitalization Strategy, the PMT is designed to fit within the existing structure of the Weston-Mount Dennis Neighbourhood Action Partnership table. This partnership already brings together most Cluster A divisions and local community agencies to coordinate service improvements and investments in the broader Weston-Mount Dennis Priority Neighbourhood.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: City and Other Agency Initiatives
- Attachment 2: Weston 2021 Design Charrette – Focus Areas
- Attachment 3: Weston 2021 Design Charrette Report Summary
- Attachment 4: Weston 2021 ULI / TAPS Report
- Attachment 5: Artscape Feasibility Study for a Cultural/Creative Hub

Attachment 1: City and Other Agency Initiatives

The Top 10 Ideas for Weston

In 2010, an urban studies class led by Paul Bedford at the University of Toronto, examined ways to revitalize Weston. The conclusions of this study resulted in “The Top 10 Ideas for Weston”, which was presented to City staff. These ideas ranged from converting the vacant commercial portion of 33/35 King Street into a program space for a branch of George Brown College, to marketing Weston as a "unique local tourism experience" by placing emphasis on transit connections and bicycle trails.

Following this presentation, the Urban Design group from City Planning, along with Councillor Nunziata, began exploring the possibility of conducting a design charrette focused on Weston that would explore how the ideas identified in this study could be realized. The design charrette is discussed in a subsequent section and was undertaken in the spring of 2011

Weston Tower Renewal Assessment (TRO)

The Toronto Tower Renewal Office (TRO) conducted an apartment building renewal assessment in winter 2011, in response to the motion passed by City Council that directed staff "to assess opportunities and to apply tower renewal concepts in the Weston and Mount Dennis areas". This assessment identified apartment characteristics and cluster opportunities to determine where Tower Renewal concepts could be applied. The goal of this assessment was to work with property owners, building managers and residents to identify areas for improvement that could be effectively addressed by working collectively.

As the area has a high concentration of rental apartment buildings (32) the physical condition, operation and amenities of these buildings play a significant role in establishing the area's character. An analysis of the apartment buildings has determined that there are opportunities for improvement. Several actions have been undertaken to move toward realizing these opportunities:

- a) An initial meeting with area apartment property owners and managers was held where Councillor Nunziata provided an overview of the important role the apartment buildings have in contributing to the revitalization of Weston. Staff provided information on the range and types of improvement actions that can contribute to revitalization, including ways to make the buildings more efficient and more enjoyable places to live. Property managers and owners showed particular interest in improving operations through actions such as achieving better waste diversion and energy efficiency.
- b) Consistent with results from area wide consultation events, improving sense of safety and security is considered a priority. As there are 32 apartment buildings in close proximity, there are benefits from taking an area based approach to

achieving improvements. Staff together with local ward Councillor have begun discussions with property owners and managers about participating in site safety reviews that will also include issues that can be addressed with neighbouring properties to achieve a more successful overall outcome. This work is closely linked to the United Way of Greater Toronto, which has designated Weston as a demonstration site for high-rise tower investments aimed at significantly improving the quality of life for area residents. The United Way Toronto work is based on their 2011 report, Vertical Poverty, which explored the concentration of poverty in Toronto's high-rise buildings.

- c) In connection with Weston 2021 Design Charrette and the Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel workshop, one apartment site (1765-1775 Weston Road) was analyzed in detail with respect to the feasibility of infill and re-use of the open space areas of the site. This analysis found that there was some potential for additional uses and new buildings. Such development could contribute to improving the appearance of the neighbourhood, be combined with overall improvements to the existing apartment buildings on the site and be a catalyst for further investment in the area.

Weston Mt. Dennis Creative/ Cultural Hub

On the direction of City Council, Artscape was retained by the City to identify the feasibility of developing a Cultural/Creative Hub model for the Weston and Mt. Dennis (WMD) areas. In December 2010, a final report was prepared that indicated that a "Creative/ Cultural Hub" was feasible in the WMD areas subject to significant financial support and community partnerships. The report advised that a "Creative/ Cultural Hub can support and be a catalyst for social, cultural and economic revitalization in the neighbourhood."

The proposed structure would contain a mix of commercial and residential uses and could include:

- a) Affordable live/work space for cultural/ creative artists;
- b) Commercial space to accommodate creative/ cultural organizations and entrepreneurs (e.g. work studios/ retail/ cafe);
- c) Community space for public access and creative/ cultural program needs (e.g.: performance & event space/ multi-purpose studio); and
- d) Weston Farmers Market.

Given the findings of the Artscape report, the pending relocation of the Weston GO station, and support from the local Councillor, City staff approached the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA). Discussions were held to identify opportunities for re-developing the municipal "Green P" surface parking lot at 16 John Street, as the location for the proposed "Creative/ Cultural Hub". For more information on the Creative/Cultural Hub see appendix 5.

The city's Affordable Housing Office is currently providing technical assistance to the TPA in pursuing at the John Street site, the potential development of a cultural/creative hub project, including a residential component. The TPA is currently undertaking due diligence on the programming of a Creative/ Cultural Hub and it is anticipated that a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a development partner will be released in 2012. A joint venture call for the sale of the John Street TPA lot is also expected to be issued in the spring of 2012.

Metrolinx recently made a \$1 million cash contribution to the City which will be used to develop and establish a Cultural/Creative Hub in Weston. The Social Development, Finance and Administration Division is directing a companion report to Executive Committee on February 13, 2012, in order to seek authority to receive the said funds.

Interdivisional Staff Visioning Workshop

In April 2011, senior City staff from various divisions participated in a one day Visioning Workshop on the Weston and Mt. Dennis areas. The exercise utilized existing staff knowledge of the area context and constraints to identify appropriate revitalization themes within the community.

The purpose of this exercise was to generate innovative ideas by identifying opportunities for implementation of current and future divisional initiatives that would promote a liveable and healthy community, while establishing a unified identity.

The exercise identified four categories for revitalization which included Physical, Social, Economic and Environmental components. Prioritized ideas were then grouped within these four categories.

This prioritization revealed a number of divisional programs /initiatives currently underway or planned within these communities. It also highlighted areas of overlap and gaps between divisions. As a result, it was recommended that a multi-divisional overarching approach was needed to promote greater social and physical connections to the wider community and access to employment opportunities. This approach would work to better coordinate current and future divisional efforts, programs and resources in these communities.

Weston 2021 Design Charrette

The Weston 2021 Design Initiative held on May 3-5, 2011, was a three day design exercise that was open to the public. This collaborative, long-range, design exercise was lead by the City of Toronto, in cooperation with Metrolinx, Councillor Nunziata and the Toronto Chapter of the Urban Land Institute (ULI). The aim of this initiative was to create design alternatives to illustrate how the village of Weston may position itself to grow and thrive over the next decade. A group of designers along with the local residents, City staff and other key stakeholders undertook the multi-day design charrette.

The charrette focused on the community as a whole and then specifically on three main sub-areas centred on Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West. Participants were divided into three design teams to address a specific sub-area within the broader community:

1. City Planning Team – Weston Town Centre
2. Metrolinx Team – Area of new GO Station and the former Price Chopper site
3. Tower Renewal Team – Apartment Towers at 1765-1775 Weston Road.

Teams were asked to explore various short and long-term design alternatives, development scenarios and circulation options in each of their sub-areas. Findings were presented to the public in a community meeting on the evening of May 5, 2011. The results of the charrette were also used as background information for the ULI Technical Assistance Panel Workshop. (See Attachment 1, Weston 2021 Design Charrette)

The exercise resulted in a number of short and long-term design alternatives. Further, it identified area strengths, challenges/weaknesses and a possible vision for the revitalization of this community. Plans were made based on the assumption that improved GO service and a new Air Rail Link (ARL) stop could increase the potential for attracting private development. This, if realized, could fund community improvements that would benefit both current and new residents and position the community to thrive.

ULI/TAP Panel (May 31- June 1, 2011)

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a non-profit research and education organization focusing on land use and real estate development. ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI offers a Technical Assistance Panel to support communities through advice about real estate and development from industry experts.

In order to determine if the short and long-term design alternatives and ideas resulting from the charrette were feasible, the Urban Land Institute (ULI Toronto) was approached to conduct their Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program in Weston. The purpose of the TAP panel was to ground the findings of the charrette in reality.

The ULI/TAP Workshop held on May 31-June 1, 2011, was a two day exercise conducted by a volunteer panel of ULI members comprised of real estate and development experts. The panel reviewed the charrette findings and other potential development sites to test their marketability for private investment. Where there was no immediate market potential for these sites, the panel explored incentive options to make development feasible and attract private investment.

The panel concluded that improved GO service and a new Air Rail Link (ARL) stop would not be enough to attract private development to the area because of the anticipated

business model (i.e. Pricing, frequency of service). This conclusion was based on the operational information made available at the time. Instead, the panel indicated that transit improvements would have to coincide with public investment in community improvements, in order to overcome negative perceptions that were viewed as obstacles to revitalization and attracting private investment.

The Panel noted that longer-term revitalization in Weston would require a number of catalysts in the form of large scale publicly funded projects such as the Metrolinx project, the Cultural/Creative Hub and the redevelopment of the John Street TPA lot. These projects have the potential of being key elements to the revitalization of the area and if undertaken successfully, could encourage further redevelopment and reinvestment in the future.

The TAP Panel also noted that City, area residents and other stakeholders should continue to make small investments in Weston to encourage incremental change, by identifying and implementing quick start and general revitalization initiatives that would work to improve Weston and its image. These initiatives should be directed to:

- a) marketing Weston's assets,
- b) improving neighbourhood safety,
- c) adding new attractions,
- d) improving connectivity,
- e) programming of public spaces,
- f) improving streetscaping,
- g) creating development incentives and
- h) improving the commitment to frequent and affordable transit.

These public investments could then "set the stage" for private investment. Such investments would in effect, create opportunities for further community improvements and investment, which could re-establish the community as a liveable, healthy, and economically thriving area.

Urban Land Institute (ULI) Innovations Grant

The City Planning Division (Urban Design) was recently awarded the Urban Land Institute's Innovations Grant in the amount of \$23,750. These funds are to be redirected towards revitalizing John Street through various streetscape improvements to transform the street from a secondary commercial thoroughfare into a vibrant mews. The grant will be supplemented with additional funding commitments from the City of Toronto Public Realm Section (\$25,000) and Metrolinx (\$25,000). The local Business Improvement Area (BIA) will also be a partner. The City Planning Division will be responsible for coordinating this revitalization effort with ULI.

Metrolinx

As a result of Metrolinx's mandate to increase rapid transit service and redevelop the existing GO Transit station in Weston, the community has become a focus of interest for examining opportunities to attract private investment and redevelopment.

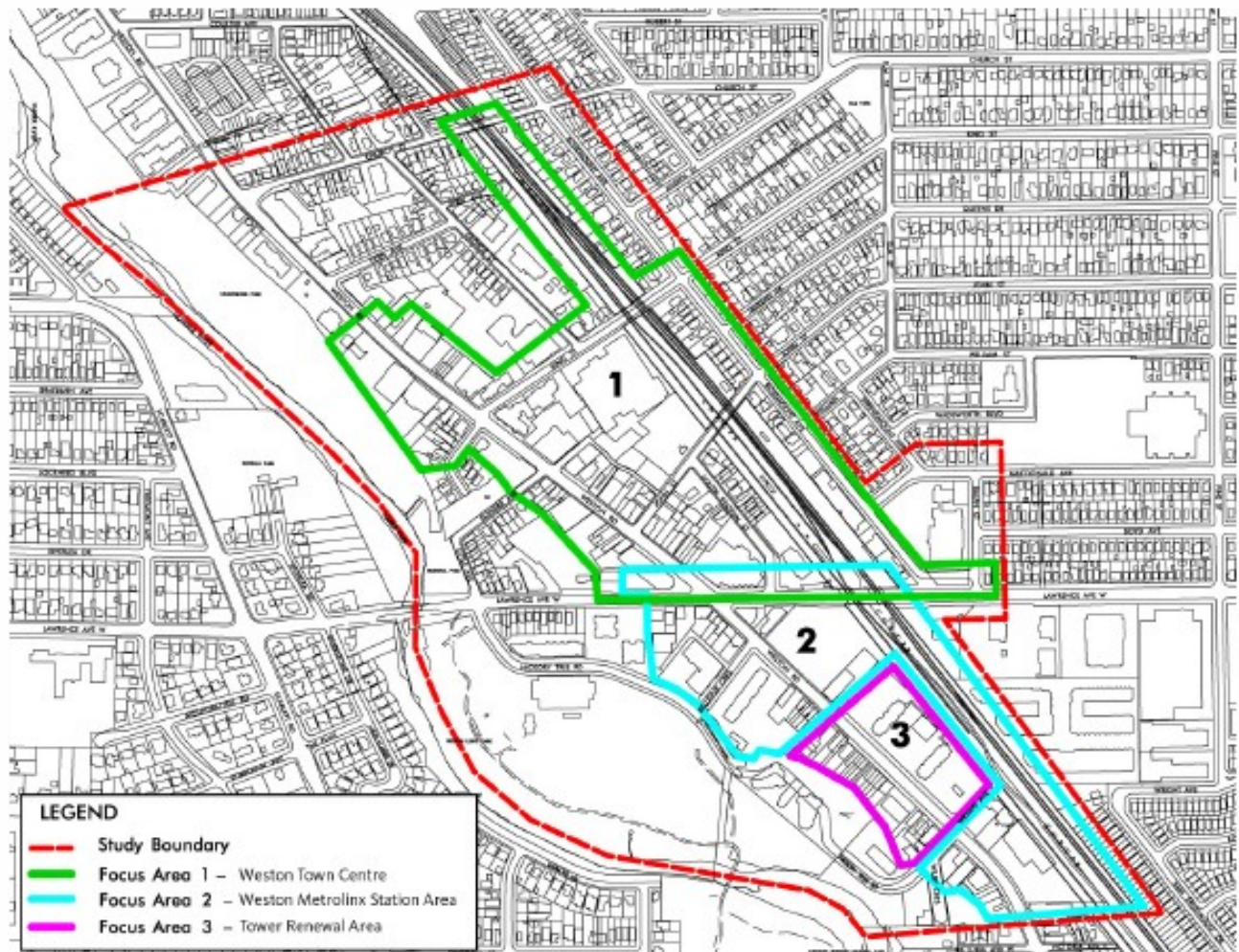
The GO/Metrolinx Georgetown South Project (GTS) will utilize the existing rail corridor that passes through Weston. The project includes infrastructure improvements to meet existing GO Transit ridership demand and future growth. It will also accommodate existing and future VIA Rail and CN freight train service as well as the new Air Rail Link (ARL) between Union Station and Pearson International Airport. Track and associated infrastructure improvements will also lead to improved GO Train commuter service between Weston and downtown Toronto. The overall GTS project extends from Bathurst Street (City of Toronto) to Highway 427 (Region of Peel) and is targeted for completion in 2015.

As part of this project, the existing GO station and platform located between John Street and Lawrence Avenue West, will be relocated to the south-east corner of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West with a new Air Rail Link platform. The new GO station will extend to Wright Avenue and be adjacent to the existing Weston Park Baptist Church site.

This project also requires that a portion of the rail corridor be lowered from Lawrence Avenue West to Church Street with a covered tunnel constructed between King Street and Church Street. John Street will also be permanently closed to vehicular traffic which will result in the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the rail corridor. Other community impacts will include the possible relocation or redevelopment of the Toronto Parking Authority (TPA) lot on John Street, decreased access to the farmer's market from the residential neighbourhood to the east and altered access throughout the community during various stages of construction.

In an effort to engage residents in the community and keep them informed, GO/Metrolinx has established a local community liaison office. Components of the project have already begun including the development of the Station Master Plan. Further, City staff has been invited to work with Metrolinx and other community stakeholders to develop a design plan for the surface of the tunnel cover (King Street and Church Street) and the John Street pedestrian bridge.

Attachment 2: Weston 2021 Design Charrette – Focus Area



Attachment 3: Weston 2021 Design Charrette Report Summary

Attachment 4: Weston 2021 ULI / TAPS Report

(To follow)

Attachment 5: Artscape Feasibility Study for a Cultural/Creative Hub